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Md. Coal Mine Accident Kills 35-Year-Old Man

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A 35-year-old Maryland man was killed Friday in what was believed to be the first coal mine accident in the state in several years.

William Junior Miller of Swanton died at the Mettiki coal mine in Garrett County, in the westernmost part of the state, authorities said last night.

The death comes as mine safety has received widespread attention because of fatalities in mine accidents in West Virginia.

Miller was apparently crushed between a mine locomotive and mining equipment that was being carried by a car pulled by a second mine locomotive, according to a release prepared by Maryland State Police.

The statement said that Miller was standing "to the rear of a locomotive which was pulling a lowboy loaded with shields."

A lowboy was described as a kind of open freight car used in mines. Shields are hydraulic roof supports used in the process known as longwall mining. The shields "were overhanging off the rear of the lowboy," the release said.

A second mine worker, who was operating a second locomotive, also loaded with shields, "approached the victim apparently not seeing him standing there," the statement said.

"The victim was crushed between the locomotive and the overhanging shields."

Authorities said the incident apparently occurred before 9:30 p.m. Friday. Federal mine safety officials will investigate. Miller's relatives could not be reached immediately last night.

A Web site regarding Mettiki says that it is an underground mining complex located near Oakland. It was constructed in 1977, according to the Web site. The mine produces medium-sulfur coal, for which the primary customer has been an electric utility with a generating plant in West Virginia.

Garrett, with topography similar to other mining areas has a long history of underground coal production. A miner died at Mettiki in 1999, according to a federal report.

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