

Accidents in mines covered up in July

By ZHI YUN
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Four coal mine accidents in July, three of them fatal, were covered up, a State report released on Tuesday said.

The State Administration of Work Safety report on Tuesday said that on July 4, flooding at the Qielichong Coal Mine in Liyang, Hunan province, trapped 16 miners. The owner concealed the accident and fled, delaying the rescue for 12 hours. Eight people died.

Thirteen days later, a gas blast that killed three people at Puxijing Coal Mine in Chenzhou, also in Hunan, went unreported.

On July 25, a shaft collapse at Anlilai Coal Mine in Pu'an county, Guizhou province, trapped five miners. Bosses failed to report the accident to authorities and attempted to organize a rescue on their own, but a second collapse then trapped 53 rescuers.

Victims of both collapses were saved after local residents called emergency services, the report said.

On July 26, a gas explosion at a coal mine in Yangquan, Shanxi province, killed seven miners and injured 30 others. The owner concealed the accident and, after being reported by residents, still withheld the number of casualties.

Wu Yanyun, deputy director of the administration's policy and regulations department, said the punishment of offenders in the accidents is unknown, but they will receive maximum penalties.

According to the Criminal Law, anyone who conceals an industrial accident gets a three-year sentence. Those involved in accidents under "serious circumstances" get up to seven years in prison.

So far this year, six coal mine accidents that killed 46 people were concealed, information from the administration indicates.



A girl looks through the half-closed rolling gate of a store at an auto parts market in Shenyang, Liaoning province, on Tuesday.

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Shenyang stores close amid inspection rumors

City government urges businesses to reopen and resume operations

By WUYONG
and LIU CE in Shenyang

The government of the northeastern city of Shenyang on Tuesday called for businesses to reopen, as officials battled widespread rumors of harsh inspections and large fines.

"All inspections are normal, and there have been no high fines. Please don't believe rumors and resume your operations," the city government said in a statement released on its official micro blog on Tuesday morning.

Two similar statements were made on the government's micro blog on Tuesday evening, adding that the public can call the government hotline, 96123, to report any high fines or unlawful inspections.

For about a month, rumors have spread among private shops and restaurants in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning province, that a massive crackdown would be launched and heavy fines imposed if inspec-

tors found counterfeit products or poor hygienic conditions.

An increasing number of businesses have suspended operations, fearing the reports. This has made life inconvenient for local residents.

"The situation drives me crazy. I can't buy ice cream around the community since all the convenience shops are closed these days," said Guo Xiaoguang, who lives in the Changbai area of Shenyang.

"If I want to buy necessities, I have to drive half an hour to the supermarket downtown."

China Daily reporters who visited four major markets on Tuesday found many shops still closed.

Most booths at the Daxi marketplace, which features electronic products, were locked. The Jiulu furniture market, in the western region of Shenyang, also was quiet. Only five large tile and china shops were open, while all other shops along the 300-meter-long commercial street were

closed.

Commercial services around Jiulu market are normally busy. But on Tuesday, only several restaurants were open, while the nearby hair salon and convenience stores were closed.

The owner of one beef noodle shop, who requested anonymity, said he has halted operations for three days.

"I'm very upset about the possible inspections, but I don't know when they will come," he said.

Zhou Lei, a self-employed owner of a computer accessories business in Sanhao street, a famous computer market area, said he has closed his business for two weeks in the past month.

"It's been heard that there will be a crackdown with heavy fines. I think there must be a reason for that. So to avoid being fined, I decided to close my shop," he said.

Zhang Wenlong, spokesman for the city's administration for industry and commerce, declined to comment when reached by phone on Tuesday.

The public security bureau also turned down China Daily's interview request on Tuesday,

adding that a news conference might be held later.

However, netizens on Tuesday posted pictures of an announcement by a Shenyang police station that said a previous crackdown against fake products has ended.

Wang Libo, a sociology professor at Shenyang Normal University, acknowledged that cracking down on counterfeiting is necessary.

However, she said, "Law enforcement departments have the duty to tell merchants the aim and standards of the investigation."

"I do not think the intention is to suffocate small enterprises, which provide a large number of jobs. However, I believe the local authorities' management of the situation should be improved," Wang said.

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Passengers rush onto tarmac after flight delay

By TANZONGYANG in Beijing
and GUO ANFEI in Kunming

More than 30 disgruntled passengers whose flights had been delayed rushed onto the tarmac of the Kunming Changshui International Airport in Yunnan province on Monday morning in an attempt to board a plane.

The passengers were upset after their flights were delayed for more than 10 hours due to thunderstorms.

Dai Bing, a staff member of West Air, the Chongqing-based airline at the center of the dispute, said the passengers were scheduled to leave for Chongqing at 11:55 pm on Sunday, but their flight was delayed due to bad weather.

Just after midnight, another delayed West Air flight, bound for the province's Xishuangbanna, was ready to take off as the weather improved.

"The two groups of stranded travelers, which had demanded to leave earlier, had quarrels in the airport," Dai said. "No one succeeded in boarding the plane."

According to Dai, the airline later arranged accommodation for nearly 300 stranded travelers, but some insisted on staying at the airport terminal.

At about 8:30 am on Monday, a group of irritated passengers who had spent the night in the terminal ran onto the airport's flight control area and sat on one of the taxiways in protest.

The local newspaper Kunming Daily quoted a woman surnamed Liu saying the drastic action was a bid for attention. "We just want to go home as early as possible. We did this in the hope of attracting the attention of authorities to help solve our problem," Liu said.

Liu said she and the other passengers had waited for more than 10 hours at the airport, and staff members had refused to answer their queries.

Guo Peisong, an official at the airport, told China Daily that more than 30 passengers heading to Chongqing trespassed onto the flight control area without permission.

"Our workers tried to stop them but they just broke through the boarding gate, which was on the ground floor," Guo said.

Guo said the incident demonstrated that some customers went too far in safeguarding their rights.

The airline said the two groups of passengers were placed on additional flights on Monday at noon. Passengers received financial compensation for the delay.

The incident sparked controversy on the Internet, with some netizens saying the passengers should be punished because their behavior harmed the safety of others.

In April, two similar incidents took place at Shanghai Pudong International Airport and Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport when dissatisfied passengers entered airport taxiways to seek compensation for flight delays.

Those incidents prompted the Civil Aviation Administration of China, the country's aviation authority, to call on passengers to remain rational when defending their rights.

Industry insiders believe that the reason some passengers tend to create trouble at airports is because there is no unified standard for flight delay compensation.

In 2004, the aviation authority issued guidelines stipulating that airlines should compensate passengers if flights are delayed for more than four hours, but did not give unified compensation standards.

A marketing manager of a domestic airline, who refused to give his name because the issue is sensitive, said that airlines set their own compensation standards because the aviation authority's regulation is too vague.

"In reality, the bigger fuss consumers create, the more compensation they will get, which encourages increasingly extreme behavior," he said.

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Baidu fires four for deleting posts

By CAO YIN
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Beijing police have detained three people working at Baidu Inc, the leading Chinese language Internet search provider, over allegations that they abused their positions and deleted forum posts in return for money.

The company confirmed that it had sacked the accused employees, along with a fourth person, who has not been included in the police investigation.

Baidu's professional ethics committee sent an e-mail to more than 16,000 staff members on Aug 1, saying four workers had made money by deleting posts on online forums under requests from other corporations.

Li Guoxun, a publicity officer for Baidu, said the four disobeyed a company rule requiring staff members not to delete posts or deal with netizens' complaints for money.

"Some clues were found by our professional ethics committee, while some were revealed by a channel provided for netizens and our employees," Li said, adding that the company often taught employees how to delete posts in line with the rules.

"We've always fought against

PROCEDURE

Steps that must be taken to remove a comment or post on a Baidu online forum

1. A complaint must be logged with the company's service center, which deals with reports of fake information online.
2. A complaint form must be filled out and handed over to the center.
3. The complaint is investigated and a response is given as soon as possible.
4. If the complaint is upheld, forum administrators will be told to delete the post.

post elimination for money and will report the matter to the police if we find similar cases," he said.

"Baidu will not hide such kinds of bribes and hopes the public can supervise our work," he said.

Police in the capital's Haidian district, which is handling the case, declined to give more details on Tuesday, but said someone who takes large bribes will face criminal punishment.

The Criminal Law states that staff members at private enterprises face up to five years in detention if the bribes are not

very big. If the bribes are huge, they will be confiscated, and the person will be sentenced to more than five years in jail.

A Baidu insider, who has worked in the company for about a year and did not want to be identified, said bribes ranged from 6,000 yuan (\$940) to tens of thousands of yuan.

"Under our rules, if an employee earns money or receives gifts by helping others delete posts without permission from the company, he or she will be criticized or fired," he said, adding that the four in the latest case received the severest punishment from the company.

Baidu will improve management targeted at employees working for online forums and give harsher punishments for those who get paid by erasing posts privately, according to Li. Netizens can supply clues via the company's online reporting mailbox, the publicity officer said.

Yang Shuo, a 32-year-old employee responsible for forum management in a State-owned enterprise in Beijing, said it is very common to see staff members make money or take bribes by deleting posts in forums.

"Some companies often ask online forum administrators to delete posts that were not good

for their images or business, or even let websites eliminate posts that were helpful to their opponents," Yang said.

"If the post is not harmful to the reputation or interest of residents or companies, forum administrators have no right to delete any information online," he said.

"If some companies want to delete posts, they must provide enough evidence to prove the information is not the truth."

Han Xue, who used to be a forum administrator in a private enterprise in Beijing, echoed Yang, saying the elimination of posts requires deletion requests accompanied by formal documents and evidence.

"Most companies don't want to disclose that their employees have taken bribes in a bid to maintain their image, but post elimination is not a secret in the Internet field," she added.

Yu Guofu, an attorney at Beijing Shengfeng Law Firm, said it is urgent for website companies to establish a "trust database" to record employees' achievements and wrongdoing.

"The punishments may not be heavy for the four at Baidu, but their illegal behavior should be written into their files, aiming to warn other companies not to recruit them," Yu said.

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