

The deaths were in the proportion of 10·35 per 1,000 persons employed. The lamentable explosion at Ralph's Colliery, Huntly, was responsible for this unusual average. That explosion has been separately reported upon by a Royal Commission of Inquiry.

With the exception of the disaster at Ralph's Colliery all the fatal accidents above enumerated occurred in the West Coast inspection district. None of those, however, was due to neglect of the statutory precautions. The three fatalities from falls were attributed to cleavage planes or "backs" not visible until exposed by the falls. A youth was killed by a runaway empty truck, owing to his standing directly in the line at the bottom of a jig. He had only a little while previously been warned by Inspector Newton not to do this. New Special Rule 57A (2) provides for a back-stay or trailer to the ascending (empty) truck or set. If such had been employed at Blackball, where Harold Dancer was killed during 1914, or when George Bain was killed at Taupiri Coal-mine in 1912, these fatalities would not have occurred.

The most serious and regrettable feature I have to report is the concealment by officials of gas-ignition and discoveries of fire-damp at some important collieries, the motive for such reprehensible conduct being doubtless to evade the installation of safety-lamps and the use of permitted explosives, as such tend to increase the cost of production, and also prevent the miners from smoking while in the mine. Should any further cases of this nature be proved the guilty person will unquestionably be proceeded against, and will suffer the utmost rigor of the law.

The following is a brief description of fatal accidents at coal-mines during 1914:—

Name of Person killed.	Date of Accident.	Name of Colliery.	Cause of Accident, and Remarks.
Walter Meadowcroft ..	9/4/14	Blackball ..	The deceased, an experienced and careful miner, was working in a bord in hard coal very closely timbered to within 3 ft. of the face, when a fall of coal occurred, breaking his back. The face was 13 ft. wide and 9 ft. high, and a series of cleavage planes or partings occurred at right angles to the bord. The Coroner found that death resulted from injuries received while at work.
George Rennie	11/8/14	Millerton ..	Deceased, a carpenter, when engaged upon the construction of a coal-bin at Granity, missed his footing and fell about 26 ft. to the floor of the bin, breaking an arm, several ribs, and received internal injuries from which he died thirty-six days later. No inquest was held.
William Allen, Thomas Baker, Thomas Berry, William Blenkinsop, John Bowler, William Burt, Hutchinson Burt, William Burton, William Broocklebank, Thomas Casson, James Darby, William Dixon (or Mitchell), William Gowans, John Greener, James Holden, William Hinch, Seymour Hopper, Alexander Izatt, Henry Jackson, John Jackson, Samuel Jackson, John W. Jones, William Kelly, Daniel Lyons, William Mayland, Charles Maloney, John Martin, Theophilus Molesworth, Robert Munsie, David Patterson, William Patterson, Henry Peckman sen., Hugh Ransome, William Roper, John Robinson, Arthur Ruston, William Slaven, John Skellern, William Smith, John Steele, Fred Taylor, Jacob Thompson, John Whorskey	12/9/14	Ralph's (Huntly) Taupiri Coal-mine (Limited)	This disaster, causing the death of forty-three persons, including the temporary manager and five deputies, was due to the ignition by a naked light of an accumulation of fire-damp in bord No. 6, district No. 5; the explosion being intensified and carried on by extremely inflammable lignite-dust. The fire-damp proceeded from a blower at a fall in the next bord. The point of origin was an unventilated and unexamined standing-pillar district. Naked lights were used throughout the mine. Several minor ignitions of gas had occurred intermittently throughout the mine. For further information, see the report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry, C.-14, published by the Government Printer, Wellington.
Isaac Crutchley ..	12/9/14	Westport-Stockton	Deceased, when working in a place 9 ft. wide and 5 ft. high having every appearance of safety, was killed by a fall of clayey sandstone, occurring in the form of a seam as a roof to the coal. The deceased, by working under this treacherous roof without timber, took a risk and lost his life.
James Robertson	9/10/14	Paparoa ..	The deceased, an experienced deputy, was in charge of a few shiftmen retimbering where a fall of coal had occurred; the work was nearing completion when a fall of coal from above the sets took place, burying deceased and some of his party. It was subsequently found that the coal came away from a well-defined back, which was not visible until exposed by the fall. The Coroner returned a verdict accordingly.
Donald McMahon	15/10/14	North Brunner	The deceased, a miner, was working in a level by himself erecting a timber chock to support the roof; no explosives were necessary for this work. The body of deceased was subsequently found in a slit about 15 yards distant, much mutilated by an explosion of gelignite. There being no fire-damp found in this mine, colliers fired their own shots. An open verdict was returned. The actual circumstances of this fatality remain a mystery.