

Russian Coal Mine to Extinguish Fire, Clear Rocks With Flooding

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A coal company in Russia's far northern Komi region was scheduled to begin pumping water early Friday into a mine where a recent series of explosions had killed 36 people, the TASS news agency reported.

The bodies of only 10 of the victims have been retrieved, while others are presumed dead, and access to their bodies has been blocked by continuous fire and more methane gas explosions, according to Russian media reports.

Coal company Vorkutaugol, which is owned by Severstal, expects the efforts to clear rock falls. Efforts to recover victims' bodies at the Severnaya mine will resume after the flooding extinguishes the flames, spokeswoman Tatyana Bushkova was quoted by TASS as saying. The flooding is expected to last 40 to 50 days, she said, TASS reported.

Pumping water into the mine was scheduled to begin early Friday, she was quoted as saying.

Earlier on Thursday, TASS quoted Vorkutaugol spokesman Andrei Kharaikin as saying the company has reached a "final decision" to begin flooding the mine, but was awaiting a court

ruling that would declare the 26 miners dead.

Two initial explosions at the Severnaya mine on Feb. 25 killed four miners and trapped 26 others. Another explosion on Feb. 28 hit the mine section where the 26 workers had been trapped, set off a fire, and killed five rescuers and a mine employee.

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