History of mining accidents in the US over the last 100 years:

For many, mining disasters are the kind of event you see happening in developing nations from the comfort of your living room. Most notably, China has in recent years lost thousands of miners due to poor health and safety regulations, and the desire to make a profit.

But as the events in West Virginia on 5 April show, mining is still a dangerous job no matter where you are. Following an explosion, at least 29 miners have been confirmed dead and four remain unaccounted for as rescue workers struggle with gas build-up inside the Upper Big Branch mine.

Between 1830 and 2000, 15,183 miners were killed in 716 separate accidents in the US. Here, we list the most tragic mining accidents to have hit the states in the last 100 years.

1907 – The worst mining disaster in American history saw 362 miners killed in an explosion at the Monongah coal mine in West Virginia.

The explosion, on 6 December, was caused by methane gas. Several rescuers died because of the toxic fumes while trying to save trapped miners. Another 239 miners died at the Darr mine in Pennsylvania. Annual deaths in coal mines during this decade exceeded 2,000.

1909 – At the Cherry coal mine in Illinois, 259 miners – some as young as 11 – died when a coal cart caught fire on a kerosene lamp. The lamps were being used because a power outage had cut all electricity supply to the mine.

1913 – An explosion at Stag Canon mine, New Mexico, claimed the lives of 263 people. An overcharged explosion was blamed for the disaster with the dry conditions inside the mine exacerbating the fire’s aftermath.

1914 – A gas explosion in the Eccles mine in West Virginia killed 180 men. The mine had been very busy that day, meaning mine carts were waiting to be hoisted to the surface. The carts were thrown into the lift shaft as a result of the explosion making it harder to get in and out of the mine.

1917 – At the Granite Mountain mine in Montana, 163 miners died after a fire was started by an uncovered carbide lamp. Another 121 were killed in an explosion at Hastings, Colorado, and 63 died in a fire at Butte, Montana.

1922 – At a gold mine in California, 47 miners were burned alive in what is still the worst gold mine disaster in the US. Rescuers tried for 22 days to find survivors but were unsuccessful.

1923 – The Stag Canon mine suffered another disaster when 120 miners died in an unexplained explosion.
1924 – Explosions at Castle Gates, Utah, and Benwood, West Virginia, killed 172 and 119 miners respectively. Improperly dampened coal power was blamed for the Castle Gates explosion after a miner tried to relight a carbide lamp, while an accumulation of methane gas caused the disaster at Benwood.

1928 – West Virginia saw another 119 miners perish in an explosion in the Mather coal mine. The mine was seen as one of the most modern in America at the time and the explosion was blamed on faulty wiring.

1940 – An explosion at Pond Creek, West Virginia, killed 91 miners. Another 72 lost their lives at Willow Grove in Ohio. Willow Grove was seen as a model of mine safety and these standards were praised in the aftermath for keeping the fatalities down.

1947 – At the Centralia coal mine in Illinois, 111 men died after a controlled explosion set off coal dust causing a fire. A total of 142 miners had been in the pit at the time with 24 managing to escape unaided.

1951 – A methane gas explosion days before Christmas in the Orient mine in Illinois claimed 119 lives. Federal inspectors had previously criticised the lack of safety measures at the mine for dealing with methane.

1968 – An explosion at the Farmington mine, West Virginia, claimed 78 lives and is widely credited with being the catalyst for modern mining safety regulations in the US. The cause of the explosion was never discovered.

1972 – A fire in the Sunshine mine in Idaho killed 91 miners, while a dam failure in the Buffalo mine in West Virginia claimed another 125 lives. After days of heavy rain the dam burst sending 132 million gallons of blackwater through Buffalo Creek, also destroying 1,000 cars and trucks and over 500 homes.

1981 – A methane gas explosion at the Dutch Creek mine in Colorado killed 15 miners. Rescue attempts were hindered by having to pump water out of the mine shaft, which had flooded after the explosion.

1984 – A faulty air compressor in a non-fire proofed area claimed 27 lives at the Wilberg mine in Utah. The disaster was the worst coal mine fire in the history of the state.

1986 – A coal pile collapse at Fairview, West Virginia, killed five miners. The miners had been standing on top of the pile inspecting the conveyor system.

1989 – A gas explosion in the Wheatcroft mine in Kentucky claimed ten lives. It was the fourth fatal accident at the mine since it opened in 1983.

1992 – Eight miners were killed at the South Mountain coal mine in Virginia after a natural build-up of methane gas triggered an explosion.
**2001** – Two gas explosions killed 13 men inside the Brookwood mine in Alabama. The first explosion was caused when a rock fell onto a battery charger, while the second resulted from the build-up of methane gas due to the first explosion.

**2006** – An explosion at the Sago mine in West Virginia trapped 13 men. By the time rescuers reached them – 36 hours later – 12 had died due to carbon monoxide poisoning. Another five miners were killed in an explosion at the Darby mine in Kentucky.

**2007** – Six miners and three rescue workers were killed at the Crandell Canyon mine in Utah. Initial reports suggest the mine’s collapse was caused by an earthquake, but afterwards it was discovered the seismic waves were to blame. The mining company was fined $1.85m for violations of health and safety.