

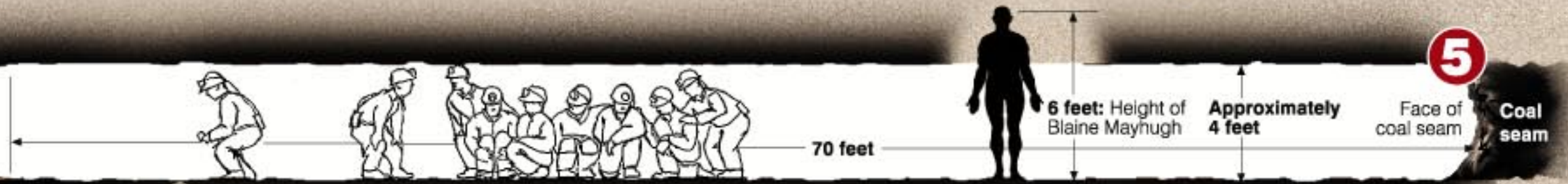
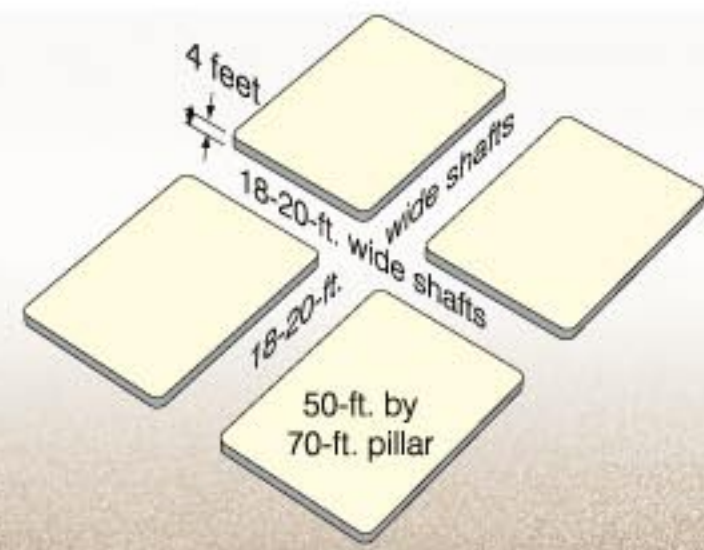
Nine men out

How a crew of Somerset County coal miners became trapped in a flooded shaft, then hung on for 78 hours while the world rooted for their rescue.

IMPORTANT

Note on scale:

The proportions of our graphic are exaggerated in order to depict a complicated scenario in a more succinct and visually comprehensible manner. The actual proportions of the mine pillars, passages and walls are shown at left.



Scene 1

- The wall is breached at Entry No. 6.
- Mark Popernack jumps out of way and into Entry No. 7, where he gets trapped.
- Thomas Foy shouts, telling the crew to get out.
- Dennis Hall gets to the phone and warns other miners of the breach.
- Miners head for the conveyor belthead at Entry No. 4 to follow the conveyor out.

Scene 2 (above)

- Miners advance about 2,000 feet to discover the water is "roofing," or hitting the mine shaft roof.
- The men turn around, retreat against the current.

Scene 3

- Upon returning, the miners see that Popernack is trapped between entries 6 and 7.
- Randy Fogle maneuvers the scooper, a small highlift, and raises the scoop to bridge the torrent of water so Popernack can jump in.

Scene 4

- Three hours have elapsed; miners are gathered at the conveyor in Entry No. 4.
- The crew decides to build cement block barriers to try to hold the water back.
- An air shaft is drilled from above into Entry No. 4 just as breathable air is running out.
- Five walls are built. Advancing water makes it impossible to finish the sixth wall.

Scene 5 (top)

- Retreat to face of Entry No. 1
- Miners take turns banging on the pipe until water gets too high.

The rescue capsule
An unmanned capsule is sent into the shaft. One by one the miners are lifted to safety.

24" X 36" door slides upward

Communicating with the trapped miners

Rescuers lowered a hands-free microphone through the air shaft to the miners. Seconds later, they were talking to rescuers.