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Title: Over 30 workers trapped after Chilean copper mine collapse.

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Abstract: The article reports on a mine structure collapse incident at San José mine, a small copper operation in northern Chile owned by Minera San Esteban Primera, on August 5, 2010 which left 33 workers trapped underground.

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Over 30 workers trapped after Chilean copper mine collapse

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San José mine, a small copper operation in northern Chile owned by Minera San Esteban Primera, suffered a cave-in on August 5, leaving 33 workers trapped underground.

Rescuers are drilling holes in an attempt to locate the workers, but there is no official confirmation whether they would be alive after four days with limited food, water and oxygen.

A second cave-in on Saturday forced rescuers to suspend works for several hours.

Workers are trapped at a depth of around 300 metres.

Local organisations, such as the federation of Chilean mining workers (FMC) and the confederation of copper workers (CTC) have questioned Minera San Esteban's safety record, highlighting several fatal accidents that have previously been reported at the small company.

Chile's president Sebastián Piñera has promised a thorough investigation into the accident.

Minera San Esteban produces around 1,200 tpy of copper, according to local news reports.

The San José mine was closed in March 2007 following a fatal accident in January that year. It resumed operations a year later, reports said.

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By Juan Weik