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Cargill's Mining Collapse in Louisiana Highlights Need to Protect Cayuga Lake

As we await further news on two missing miners at [Cargill's Avery Island Salt Mine in Louisiana](#), we wonder if Monday's accident at the mine was related to a December 3rd Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) citation at the mine related to "ground control" issues. Ground control is a mining term that can refer to risks of rock fall from the ceiling as well as to irregularities in the floor of the mine. Rock falls can sometimes lead to mine collapse and flooding when so-called rubble chimneys connect to sources of water.

Cargill has disregarded warnings from regulators and failed to report risk-related information to regulators in the past. In 1968, 21 miners died in Cargill's Belle Island Salt Mine in Louisiana after the shafts linking the mine to the surface caught fire. Reportedly, months earlier a state regulator had warned Cargill that their shafts contained flammable materials and were a fire hazard.

At Cargill's Cayuga Salt Mine in Lansing, New York, Cargill didn't reveal geological anomalies, which are zones of weakness, on their annual mining plan maps released to New York State regulators until seven years after learning about them. A Cargill consultant had shown five adjacent anomalies in a 2010 report to Cargill as a *continuous* zone of weakness. When Cargill finally displayed these to regulators, they were shown as discrete islands of weakness without connectivity. During the seven years that Cargill remained silent about these anomalies, the company appears to have mined tens of millions of dollars of salt that might have become inaccessible had Cargill disclosed to regulators the consultant's original unedited map in 2010.

Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) records indicate that in 2019 and 2020 (to-date) at three of Cargill's salt mines in Ohio, Louisiana and New York, MSHA issued citations for 106, 119, and 80 violations, respectively. Of these, about half a dozen per site were related to ground control issues.

"We wish Cargill success in rescuing their two missing miners," says Stephanie Redmond, Program Manager for Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now (CLEAN). "We also wish that New York State would once and for all end salt mining under Cayuga Lake. It is too risky for Cargill's miners and for the long-term health of Cayuga Lake."