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Chile's Codelco Concludes El Teniente Rescue After Five Miners Found Dead

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All five workers trapped in the El Teniente copper mine in Chile have been confirmed dead, according to a statement by state-owned mining company Codelco. The collapse occurred on 31 July 2025, following a 4.2 magnitude earthquake that struck the region. Recovery efforts were suspended after the final victim's body was retrieved, ending the multi-day operation.

El Teniente, one of the world's largest underground copper mines, has long faced geological challenges. The recent collapse is the latest in a series of safety incidents that have raised concerns over working conditions in Chile's mining sector. During the funeral processions, mourners gathered to honor the miners, whose names have yet to be officially released.

Codelco announced it would conduct a full investigation into the incident and vowed to implement additional safety measures. In a statement, the company emphasized its commitment to worker safety and to identifying the cause of the collapse. The Chilean National Geology and Mining Service (Sernageomin) has also launched its own inquiry.

El Teniente's history includes a major tragedy in 1945 when 355 miners died in a fire. While the mine has undergone modernization over the decades, recent years have seen repeated safety concerns. In 2010, 33 miners were famously rescued from the San José mine in northern Chile after being trapped underground for 69 days, highlighting the nation's mining risks.

Studies have suggested a correlation between rising copper prices and increased accident rates, potentially due to pressure to meet production targets. Chile remains the world's largest copper producer, and El Teniente is central to its output. Codelco, responsible for nearly a third of global copper supplies, has faced declining production since 2004, attributed in part to geomechanical issues in its underground operations.

The company has pledged to improve protocols across its facilities. In the aftermath of this tragedy, Codelco's management reiterated the need for stricter safety compliance, especially in light of the mine's aging infrastructure and seismic activity in the region.

The miners' families are being supported by local authorities, and compensation procedures are expected to follow standard labor regulations. The broader mining community has called for a renewed focus on risk mitigation and investment in safety technology to prevent future loss of life in Chile's critical mining sector.