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Tragedy at El Teniente as All Five Trapped Miners Found Dead Following Shaft Collapse

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SANTIAGO, CHILE — The bodies of all five miners who had been trapped underground for three days following a shaft collapse at Chile's El Teniente mine have been recovered and formally identified, authorities confirmed on Saturday. The final body was located on Saturday afternoon, bringing to a close a high-risk search operation that began after a deadly seismic event struck the site on Thursday.

Aquiles Cubillos, chief prosecutor in the O'Higgins region, confirmed that the last missing miner, Moises Pavez, was found at approximately 3:30 p.m. local time. "We deeply regret this outcome," Cubillos stated, noting that emergency teams had drilled through dense rock under immense time pressure in hopes of reaching survivors.

The collapse occurred after a 4.2 magnitude earthquake struck central Chile, triggering a partial failure in the subterranean infrastructure of El Teniente, the world's largest underground copper mine. One worker was killed instantly during the quake, and nine others sustained injuries. The five deceased miners became trapped hundreds of metres below ground with no way of communicating with rescue teams.

Authorities initially used GPS (Global Positioning System) technology to determine the miners' last known locations, but poor conditions underground hampered further contact. It is still unclear whether the earthquake was a naturally occurring event or induced by ongoing mining activities. Investigators have launched a dual probe—one examining the origin of the tremor, and another to determine whether safety protocols were breached.

The mine is operated by state-owned firm Codelco (Corporación Nacional del Cobre de Chile), which halted operations in the affected area immediately after the incident. Approximately 3,000 workers were safely evacuated from other sections of the site. Codelco also cancelled the scheduled release of its first-half financial results, citing the focus on rescue efforts.

Chile sits along the seismically active Ring of Fire, where tectonic movements frequently trigger quakes across the Pacific basin. The mining sector, a cornerstone of Chile's economy, is particularly vulnerable due to the nation's mountainous terrain and deep mineral deposits. Chile remains the world's largest copper producer, with mining output playing a crucial role in the country's economic stability and export earnings.

The incident has prompted renewed scrutiny of underground mining safety standards in the region. Comparisons are being drawn to Chile's infamous 2010 San José mine disaster, where 33 miners were successfully rescued after spending 69 days trapped underground.

While Codelco has extended condolences to the victims' families, unions and legal authorities are expected to press for answers regarding possible negligence or operational oversight.

Further updates will follow as the official investigations progress.