Mine Rescue competitions drive safer workers

Singleton (Australia) – Monday, 21 July 2014

The 31st annual Hunter Valley underground Mines Rescue competition was held at the Hunter Valley Mines Rescue station on Friday, 18 July 2014. The role of this longstanding competition is to help improve industry safety. This is achieved through creating a unique training opportunity where emergency response teams can measure their performance in a realistic, but safe, work environment.

The Hunter Valley coal mining industry has always supported the competition allowing Brigadesmen from underground mines to train and participate. This is a great opportunity for competitors to seek feedback on their individual and team performance. It is also an opportunity for mine operations and Mines Rescue to test emergency response capabilities.

Six teams, including two composite teams, battled it out for the coveted title this year. Each was put through five different active rescue scenarios which focused on possible emergency situations. These included exercises in firefighting, search and rescue, extrications (involving trapped miners) and applying first aid. Theory and individual practical skills were also assessed.

‘Brigadesmen competitions are an invaluable way to develop safety skills. The types of scenarios have not changed too much over the last 30 years, but neither have the basic mechanics of mining. What has changed is the attitude and focus on working more safely,’ says Hunter Valley Regional Manager Mines Rescue, David Connell.

General Manager Mines Rescue and Regulation & Compliance, Paul Healey agrees saying ‘30 years ago workers accepted that mining was a dangerous industry. Today safety is prioritised above all else. Our primary focus today is to build proactive safety leaders for industry, to prevent incidents and provide protection for industry.’

Peabody’s North Wambo team were announced at Friday’s presentation dinner as the overall winners on the day, taking the winning streak of this team to six straight. Assessors agreed
that teamwork, leadership and commitment made for the winning formula.

Captain on the day Michael Murphy says 'I would like to thank Peabody for their continued support and each of our team members for their commitment. I would also like to thank Mines Rescue for putting on a great technical and skills based competition. With Matt Bailey, our Captain, unable to attend on the day the team were required to work even more collaboratively to get across the line this year. We are all looking forward to the Australian competition to bring home the trophy for NSW.'

Managing Director/CEO Coal Services, Lucy Flemming says ‘the role of Coal Services is to continually work with industry to improve health and safety. We have seen a significant reduction in injuries and mine emergencies over the last 30 years and continue towards the collective goal of zero harm.’

Mines Rescue competitions offer Brigadesmen an opportunity to practise and better their safety skills, in a safe and controlled environment. It’s creating important opportunities like these that keep safety top of mind and prevent complacency.

- Ends

Wambo Team Members (pictured above)
Back (L-R): Mitchell Lydon, Warren Kirk, Jarrod Brown
Front (L-R): Michael Murphy, Kurt Bereza

Facts about Mine Rescue Brigadesmen
- Minimum 5% industry dedicated to emergency response (1 in 20 underground workers)
- Initial ten day induction training required for all new recruits
- Brigadesmen enrolment is voluntary
- Six training days required per year for all Brigadesmen
- A large percentage of Brigadesmen progress into more senior mining roles
- 136 Brigadesmen in the Hunter Valley, 550 Brigadesmen in NSW

Available for interview
- Lucy Flemming – Managing Director/CEO Coal Services
- Paul Healey – General Manager Mines Rescue and Regulation & Compliance
- Steve Tonegato – State Manager Mines Rescue
- David Connell - Regional Manager Mines Rescue

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About Coal Services:

Coal Services is an industry owned organisation committed to providing critical service and expertise to the NSW coal mining industry.

Coal Services is dedicated to working in partnership with customers and stakeholders to provide a suite of health, safety, environment and insurance solutions. These critical services
support NSW coal mine workers, employers and communities and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe workplace and a healthy workforce.

Coal Services has statutory functions, as outlined within the NSW Coal Industry Act 2001. These functions include, but are not limited to, the provision of workers compensation; occupational health and rehabilitation services; the collection of statistics and the provision of mines rescue emergency services and training to the NSW coal industry.