



Open cut coal mining workforce in safe and skilled hands

Hunter Valley (Australia), 15 November 2016 —

BHP Billiton's Mt Arthur Coal team has claimed top honours in the 2016 Open Cut Mines Rescue Competition, ending former back-to-back champions Glencore Bulga's hopes of a winning streak.

The rescue skills of the Mt Arthur Coal surface emergency responders proved too good, as 110 competitors from 11 New South Wales mine sites faced a series of high-pressure scenarios at the Hunter Valley Mines Rescue station on Friday 4 November, 2016.

From a tricky vertical rescue, to a gruesome impalement and vehicle extrication using hydraulic cutters, this year's participants demonstrated their potentially life-saving expertise when confronted with seven challenging simulated emergencies.

Open cut workers currently account for approximately 89% of production employment within Hunter Valley coal mines. Mines Rescue Regional Manager, David Connell, said surface emergency responders were critical in ensuring the safety of this significant portion of the region's coal industry.

'The industry must be confident in the ability of surface emergency responders to step up, take control and stabilise any situation that occurs,' Mr Connell said.

'When a complex incident arises at an open cut mine, the workforce turns to these dedicated individuals. Although prevention is our primary focus, competitions such as this play a key role in ensuring the knowledge and skills of surface emergency responders are maintained.'

Mt Arthur Coal captain, Mark Endersby, said his team, which included two new members, was excited to participate in this year's competition and it was great to see their preparation had paid off.

'We were lucky enough to win the competition this year, with wins in the confined space and fire section of the competition giving us overall first place on the day,' Mr Endersby said.

'As captain of the team this year, I can say it was a proud feeling to be part of this winning group of people and I compliment them on the work they put in training for the competition, with everyone also committing the extra time into training to make this achievement happen.'

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Jayme McGregor has been involved with the Mt Arthur Coal rescue team for more than six years. With 2016 marking her first appearance at the competition as an active team member, Ms McGregor said she was thrilled to come away with the win.

'My teammates are such a great group of talented and committed responders, and I'm proud to have been given the opportunity to be involved,' Ms McGregor said.

'I became a responder because I wanted to be able to help out and make a difference if anything were to ever happen to my fellow workers. I'm grateful that I've been able to learn so much and gain skills that are of benefit both at work and outside of it. Being a mother, you can never have enough experience and confidence when it comes to handling incidents and injuries.'

John Hunter Hospital Hunter Retrieval Service member, Dr Rob Bartolacci, was on hand to observe the day's action. Dr Bartolacci said surface responders helped to ensure better outcomes for patients and ease the workload of frontline emergency service personnel.

'It provides a first line of defence and assistance, and allows us to do our job better because in many cases people are already rescued and treatment has been started, so there's less work for us to do,' Dr Bartolacci said.

'The competition's realistic scenarios are such that the teams develop the rapport, skills, knowledge and experience to prepare them should they encounter one of these unfortunate events in real-life. Without prior training, it's almost impossible to be adequately prepared and to function at your best.'

'To have people that are so well-trained, so dedicated and so eager to help their fellow workers is outstanding. The facilities and staff of Mines Rescue are world-class, and the way that the competition has been run is brilliant.'

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Fast facts

- 2016 Open Cut Mines Rescue Competition attracted 110 participants from 11 NSW mine sites:
 - Glencore: Bulga, Liddell, Mt Owen, Ravensworth, Ulan
 - Rio Tinto: Mt Thorley Warkworth, Hunter Valley Operations
 - New Hope: Bengalla
 - Peabody Energy: Wambo, Wilpinjong
 - BHP Billiton: Mt Arthur Coal
- Winner: BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal
- Second: Glencore Ravensworth
- Third: Glencore Bulga
- Mines Rescue is responsible for training surface emergency responders in rescue techniques and for providing expert advice and supervision in the event of an incident.

- Mines Rescue also ensures emergency response procedures and guidelines are in place, tested and ready to be deployed at each mine. It regularly conducts audits and simulated emergencies to test its own emergency response capabilities, as well as those of the mines and other emergency services.
- Mines Rescue is fully resourced and equipped to quickly, safely and efficiently respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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About Coal Services:

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

We operate a Specialised Health and Safety Scheme that provides an integrated suite of services aimed at preventing injury and illness in the workplace. These services help employers to identify, assess, monitor and control many risks inherent in the NSW coal mining industry.

Our preventative and responsive services in the areas of occupational health and safety, workers compensation, mines rescue and training help to deliver on our purpose 'to protect'.

We are jointly owned by two shareholders, the NSW Minerals Council and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). Our purpose, vision and values are aligned to focus on the safety and health of our industry and its workers.