



Third year a charm for Captain Darrell Squires at Newcastle competition

Newcastle (Australia), 22 July 2016 —

It's early on a frosty, cold morning at Yancoal's Abel Mine, near Maitland. The sun is just starting to rise. A young lady is screaming as blood drips from an open wound on her forearm. A crowd forms around her and the scene is abuzz with energy as they respond to the scenario before them.

On 24 June 2016 over 36 local brigadesmen from Mandalong, Ashton, Chain Valley, Myuna, West Wallsend, Austar and Abel mines came together for the annual Newcastle Mines Rescue Competition. These volunteer brigadesmen woke to a 6am text message alerting them of the event details and how long they had to get there. This level of detail adds to the realism of what would actually happen in an emergency. On arrival to the site they were allocated into teams and a captain and vice-captain selected.

Mines Rescue competitions such as these take months of preparation to create realistic scenarios that mirror potential mining incidents where local brigadesmen's skills would be activated. The Newcastle Mines Rescue team did an excellent job delivering a challenging competition format of both underground and pit-top scenarios. These included search and rescue, first aid, firefighting, use of virtual reality and a theory test.

Darrell Squires from Mandalong Mine captained the winning team on the day. Having conceded to being runner-up for the last two years, this was a well-deserved result for this seasoned brigadesman. Darrell has been a part of the Mines Rescue brigade for the past 16 years and has competed in every Newcastle competition since joining.

Darrell and his team, which included members from Mandalong, Ashton, Myuna and Austar, will now represent New South Wales at the Australian Competition to be held later in the year in Queensland. This will be Darrell's fourth time he has captained a team at the Australian championship.

The Newcastle competition format forms composite teams where brigadesmen from mines across the district are formed into teams on arrival at the event. When Darrell was asked to reflect on the role of captaining a Mines Rescue team in this format he said 'It's really important that you gauge pretty quickly the experience of all of your team members. You need to ask lots of questions, then set tasks based on experience. I generally also try to flank these more experienced brigadesmen with the newer trainees, particularly for those who have not

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competed before.'

Darrell also endorsed the competition itself. He said 'The team at Newcastle Mines Rescue did a great job organising this event. The tasks really tested the skills of the brigadesmen, it flowed well and the effort that went into the realism of the first aid scenarios should be commended.'

When reflecting on the importance of the competitions themselves, Darrell said 'It is great getting to apply your training and working under pressure with different people from across our local mining district. It's also good to know that our industry is well-prepared and has trained and capable brigadesmen available in the event of an emergency.'

Mines Rescue competitions give brigadesmen, and in particular new trainees, an opportunity to apply their training.

Peter Cornford, Newcastle Mines Rescue Regional Manager agreed. 'New trainees joining a Mines Rescue brigade complete an intensive induction training program. They gain a lot of information and knowledge in a short period of time. We do really encourage our new trainees to participate in our annual competition. We always put one new trainee in each team. This gives them the opportunity to work with very experienced captains, like Darrell, to apply their new skills. It really does allow self-assessment of their skills, and provide direction for future training.

He noted this knowledge transcends well beyond their role in Mines Rescue as brigadesmen. 'We hear all the time from industry that these new found skills and knowledge create smarter, safer miners who really do have a greater hazard and safety awareness due to their mines rescue training.'

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