



Mines Rescue teams demonstrate skill under pressure

Newcastle (Australia), 24 June 2019 —

Brigadesmen from across the region were called to Yancoal's Abel Mine on Friday, 21 June to compete in the annual Newcastle Mines Rescue competition. Team Orange led by John Downie were declared overall winners of the event after a full day of underground and surface simulations that were designed to test their emergency response skills.

The primary purpose of Mines Rescue is to provide emergency response to the NSW coal mining industry in the case of an emergency. Events like these allow brigadesmen to practice and hone their skills in preparation for the unfortunate circumstance where they may be called upon.

'The Newcastle competition simulates what would happen if a real incident or emergency occurred at a mine site,' explained Peter Cornford, Regional Manager. 'Teams are formed as they arrive at the designated site. These guys aren't training together on a regular basis, so it's as much about their ability to communicate and work together as a team as much as it a test of skill.'

Mr Cornford said that the competition enables new trainees to work with and learn from more experienced brigadesmen.

'Some of the guys competing here today have 25 years' experience or more. They, and all our volunteer brigadesmen, play an important role as safety leaders at their mine sites. They can all be proud of their performance today.'

Mr Cornford also thanked Yancoal for partnering with Newcastle Mines Rescue in hosting the competition at Abel mine, which is on care and maintenance.

'These competitions are made possible through a lot of careful planning and organisation to make them as real as possible. I'd like to thank William Farnworth, Brad Merchant and their team for allowing us to hold the event at Abel and helping us with our preparation.'

The competition is the first in a series of regional competitions hosted by NSW Mines Rescue. Competitions will also take place in Singleton, Wollongong and Mudgee with the winning teams from each region invited to compete in the Australian competition to be held in later in the year.

John Downie (captain) reflected on his short but eventful time as a brigadesman and thanked his team for their efforts throughout the day.

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'I've only been a brigadesman for three years. My brother passed away three years ago, and I joined mines rescue to keep a promise I had made to him. We were going to do the training together. After I finished the initial training I pretty much went straight into the regional competition. I was on Darrell Squires' winning team and so we went to the Australian comp after that.'

Mr Downie was inspired by Squires' leadership to pursue a path to captain a team.

'He (Squires) definitely set the standard for being a captain and in rescue. The biggest challenge today as for myself in managing the team, being my first time as a captain. I'd like to thank my team – they did really well today. We had a few younger fellas who have just finished their training and others who have been to the Australian or competed at a regional competition.'

'I'd also like to thank John Turner for allowing us to have the time off to attend training exercises. He is a driving force for us, and also Centennial Coal for giving us the opportunity. We're looking forward to representing our region at the Australian comp this year.'

Mr Turner praised Downie's efforts on the day, acknowledging that winning a mines rescue competition within three years of completing his induction training is a great achievement.

'John achieved this due to his personal drive, great leadership skills, ability to manage under stress and his ability to effectively triage casualties and drive his team to perform at 100% to treat and evacuate them. John has a great future ahead of him in mines rescue and anything else he commits himself to.'

Facts about NSW Mine Rescue Brigadesmen

- There are 461 voluntary brigadesmen across the NSW coal industry
- Minimum 5 per cent industry dedicated to emergency response (1 in 20 underground workers)
- Initial ten day induction training required for all new recruits
- Six training days required per year for all brigadesmen
- A large percentage of brigadesmen progress into more senior mining roles

- ENDS -

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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 are 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.

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