

Competition Puts Rescue Teams' Skills to the Test

A dozer suddenly turns over. Has the driver suffered a medical emergency? And are there bystanders in danger as well?

A fire breaks out in a warehouse. Have workers inside been overcome by thick smoke?

There's been an accident underground — a man has a broken leg. How do you deliver first aid in a confined space and retrieve him for more extensive treatment?

The heavy trades carry an element of risk. Companies, sites and your Union do what they can to minimize those risks with safety procedures and protocols. But when unpredictable accidents like the above scenarios occur, Mine Rescue Teams are called into action.

Every mine site is required to have a contingent of rescue personnel, trained in emergency response. These men and women get an opportunity to put those skills to the test — in a scenario where, thankfully, no real injuries have been suffered — at the annual Alberta Surface Mine Rescue Competition.

The 31st annual competition was held in June 2011 in Edson, Alberta at Sherritt's Coal Valley Mine and Obed Mountain

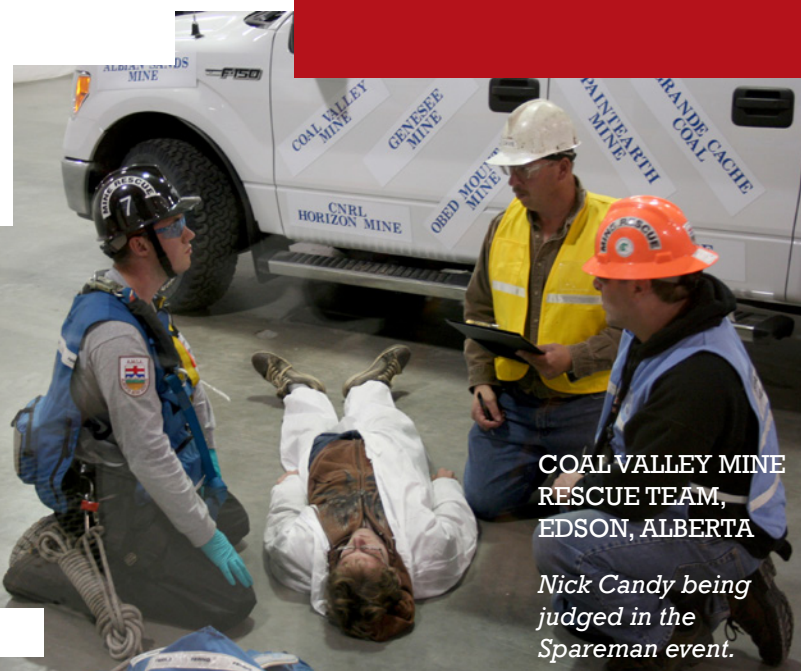
Mine. 2011 was the Town of Edson's 100th anniversary, and hosting this event was a fitting way to commemorate the town's history as the gateway to Alberta's Coal Branch. Mine rescue competitions go back almost as far. On display at this year's event were photos honouring rescue teams dating back to the early 1920s.

Twelve teams from across the province were on-site to compete, including three teams representing IUOE sites: Coal Valley Mine, Paintearth Mine and Sheerness Mine. Rescue operations became a spectator sport as the crowd — consisting of participants' co-workers and families as well as cheering locals — watched the competitors race against time in mock accident scenarios, complete with volunteer "victims" with make-up wounds oozing fake blood.



SHEERNESS MINE RESCUE TEAM, HANNA, ALBERTA

Sheerness team competing in the main event.

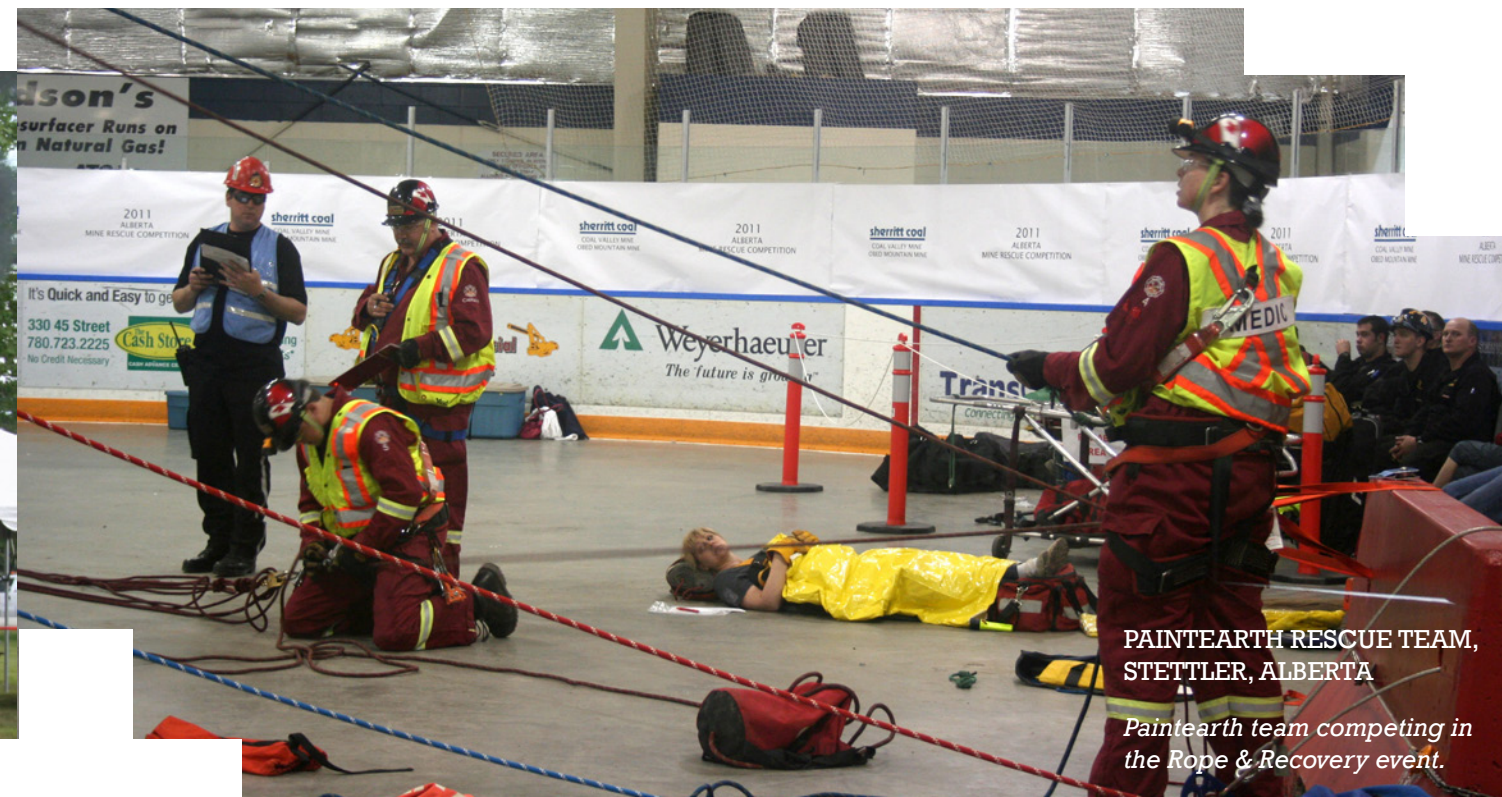


COAL VALLEY MINE RESCUE TEAM, EDSON, ALBERTA

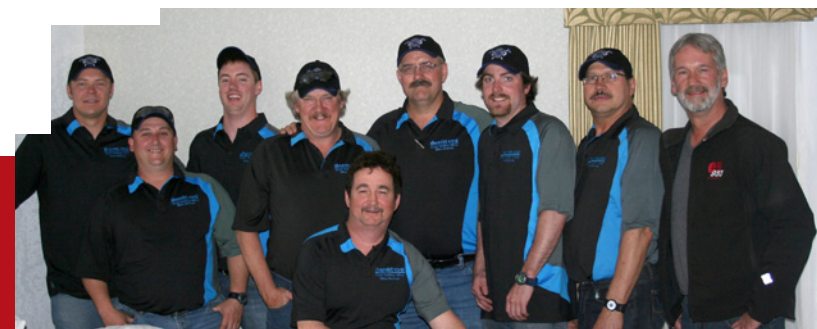
Nick Candy being judged in the Spareman event.



COAL VALLEY MINE RESCUE TEAM,
EDSON, ALBERTA
Competing in the Fire-Fighting event.



PAINTEARTH RESCUE TEAM,
STETTLER, ALBERTA
Paintearth team competing in the Rope & Recovery event.



COAL VALLEY MINE RESCUE TEAM, EDSON, ALBERTA ▲

Left to right: Cory Arndt, Todd Cormier, Nick Candy, Kerry Parnall, Bert Beaupre, Stan Murry, Daryl Ord (Captain), Dan Laboucane and Frank Araneda (Business Agent).



PAINTEARTH RESCUE TEAM, STETTLER, ALBERTA ▶

Left to right: (Back Row) Greg Blumhagen, Brian Wegenast, Joey Boxma, Martin Rowland (Captain), Robert Cook, (Front Row) Matthew Koenraadt and Shari Dempster.



SHEERNESS MINE RESCUE TEAM, HANNA, ALBERTA ▶

Left to right: Roger Derbyshire, Chuck Williams, Rob Sigsworth (Captain), Jeff Dalwood, Jayson Andrews, Kent Gladdish, Bernard McCoy, Ken Hamilton and Frank Araneda (Business Agent).

Components of the competition included:

- ✦ Fire Fighting
- ✦ First Aid
- ✦ Rope and Recovery: retrieving an injured person from an inaccessible location (such as the top of a haul truck or inside a silo) using rope and rigging systems.
- ✦ Smoke House: finding and rescuing injured workers from a simulated smoke-filled environment.

The highlight of the competition was the Main Field Event, which simulates a multi-casualty accident and requires participants to bring all their skills to bear. This year's virtual chaos was provided by a crane hitting a lowboy and knocking a dozer onto its side.

The overall winner this year was the team from PMRL Highvale Mine. Besides trophies and bragging rights, they earned the opportunity to represent Alberta at the biennial Western Regional Mine Rescue Competition. Next year's event will be held in June in Fort McMurray.

Congratulations and thanks to all the competitors, who put so much time and effort into perfecting skills that save lives.

