

## Gravley takes 1st at mine rescue nationals

Peabody Coal Company of Marissa, Ill., took top honors at the 1999 National and International Mine Rescue, First Aid, EMT and Bench Contest held in Louisville, Ky., Sept. 24-25.

Energy West Mining Silver Team member Steve Gravley captured first place in the Bench Competition at the contest.

Mine rescue competitions are designed to test the knowledge of miners who might be called upon to respond to a real mine emergency.

The contest requires six-member teams to solve a hypothetical mine emergency problem — such as a fire, explosion or cave-in — while judges rate them on their adherence to mine rescue procedures and how quickly they complete specific tasks.

Forty-five teams from 11 states participated in this year's contest.

"When you watch a mine rescue contest, you cannot help but marvel at the physical and emotional effort these men and women expend," said Davitt McAteer, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

"Never mind that it's a staged emergency. These contests are treated like the real thing, because mine rescue teams never know when

they'll be called upon to rescue their colleagues who have become injured or trapped underground," McAteer added.

"The mining industry all around the globe faces safety and health challenges," McAteer said. "These challenges are more difficult in some parts of the world than in others. As all of us struggle to find ways to prevent mining disasters, MSHA welcomes this opportunity to share our technical expertise with other countries."

In other phases of the competition, benchmen — those individuals charged with maintaining rescue equipment — must thoroughly inspect breathing devices that have been purposely tampered with and must correct those defects as quickly as possible.

In the Emergency Medical Technician contest, a primary and secondary EMT tackle real-life scenarios.

EMTs are certified and provide medical care until the patient arrives at the hospital. In the first aid contest, participants must demonstrate the correct method of caring for an injured miner.

Mine rescue training began in the United States in 1910, the year the



Energy West's Steve Gravley took top honors in the Bench Competition at the National Mine Rescue Contest.

U.S. Bureau of Mines was created. Joseph A. Holmes, the bureau's first director, sought a training vehicle that would provide the mining industry with a cadre of mine rescue

specialists who would be prepared to respond to mine disasters.

The training efforts evolved into local and regional competitions and, a year later, a national contest.

## 1999 National Mine Rescue Contest

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