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MEDIA RELEASE

REMOVING WORKERS FROM RISK WINS FIRST PRIZE IN MINING SAFETY INNOVATION AWARDS

A simple but ingenious device which removes workers from the risks associated with installing supports during the relocation and storage of heavy equipment has won the NSW Minerals Council Safety Innovation Award for 2008.

The self-locking Heavy Equipment Jack, designed by the engineering and maintenance teams at Mount Thorley Warkworth Coal Mine, is a combination Jack and support stand which removes the need for workers to be under machines to position supports when moving heavy equipment.

The unanimous winner of this year's award has widespread application to other industries and is designed to remove workers from the risks of standing under a heavy suspended load to put in place support stands, required when using conventional Jacks or hydraulic systems to move such loads.

The Jack's inventors Wayne Nealon, maintenance team leader at the mine, and Myles Huntley, reliability engineer, said they were extremely surprised to discover that there was no Jack on the market which would allow workers to complete this essential task without standing under a suspended load.

Dr Nikki Williams, CEO of the NSW Minerals Council said the device was an example of the lateral thinking which has driven world changing innovation for centuries.

"Given that is impossible to remove the existence of hazardous suspended loads, this device removes workers from the vicinity of the hazard while still completing the task at hand.

"Australia's mining industry is the safest in the world. It has achieved that record by constantly looking at what it does and how to do it better.

"The beauty of this year's winner and many, many other inventions from the mining industry is that they not only raise the safety bar but they have widespread application to people outside the sector. '

This year's Highly Commended award went to Austar Mines for its development of a world first positive pressure chamber which eliminates the fatal risks of spontaneous combustion in underground mines.

The People's Choice Award, voted by conference delegates, went to Centennial Coal, Springvale, vent sliding door which has eliminated injuries and near misses caused by the difficulty of opening hinged doors when they are under high pressure.

Centennial Coal's Mandalong Mine was commended for its development of a magnetic mesh locator which has eliminated common safety incidents associated with installing mesh to secure mine roofs

A Special Acknowledgement was awarded to Xstrata Coal NSW, Beltana Mine, for the development of Longwall Automation in underground mines.

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