



News from the Mine Safety Technology Consortium

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Mine Safety Technology Consortium Begins Task of Promoting West Virginia-grown Technological Solutions

MONTGOMERY, W.Va. _ The Mine Safety Technology Consortium, a multi-disciplinary organization created to take advantage of West Virginia's century-long expertise in mining in the mountains, debuted Tuesday by providing a showcase for a Phillipi company to demonstrate a system for tracking miners underground.

"We want to take advantage of the 100-plus years of coal mining in the mountains and convert that into technology and jobs," said Dr. Tony Szwilski, co-chair of the MSTC steering committee and director of Marshall University's Center for Environmental, Geotechnical and Applied Sciences.

MSTC invited Extreme Endeavors and Consulting Inc., of Phillipi, to demonstrate its developing underground tracking technology to the media, economic development professionals and students and faculty at the Community & Technical College at West Virginia University of Technology.

"Our job is to help companies like Extreme Endeavors with sharing their idea and help them get to market," said CTC @ WVU Tech President Dr. Beverly Jo Harris, co-chair of MSTC.

"Our presentation today promotes the three main objectives of MSTC: enhance economic development in the region, develop the workforce for today and future for the U.S. mining industry and continuously improve miner safety and health," said Director Dennis Jarvis II.

Extreme Endeavors President Michael Masterman demonstrated the technology the company has developed under a \$200,000 "proof of concept" contract from the National Institutes of Occupational Safety and Health. Extreme Endeavors is applying for future grants from NIOSH and others to take the technology beyond the prototype stage and into production.

"We beat out some of the leading research and development companies for the current contract," Masterman said.

Harris praised Masterman and Extreme Endeavors as examples of the "exciting innovation that people from West Virginia can do. And Szwilski added that the expertise West Virginians have developed in mining in mountains isn't often recognized or appreciated.

"This is not an endorsement of Extreme Endeavors' product," Jarvis said, "but in keeping with our mandate to support West Virginia initiatives and development."

MSTC is a principal component of a parent project currently under way at CEGAS and is supported by a \$2 million grant from the federal Economic Development Administration. The funding was granted to CEGAS, with the assistance of US Rep. Nick Rahall, to "invest in the core capabilities of state institutions to advance the innovative capabilities and entrepreneurial activities to produce mine safety technologies and knowledge intensive products and services in West Virginia, and to benefit the US mining industry."

The grant is matched by \$1 million in state funds and \$600,000 in donations for a total of \$3.6 million. Funds from private sources included \$100,000 from Arch Minerals (a division of Arch Coal Inc., St. Louis, MO) and \$200,000 from State Electric Supply Co., Huntington, WV. An additional \$400,000 of in-kind contributions came from consortium members.

Other members of the consortium include: Dr. Chris Bise, chair of the Department of Mining Engineers at West Virginia University; Doug Conaway, Arch Coal; Chris Hamilton, senior vice president, West Virginia Coal Association; Jack Holt, senior vice president, Consol Energy; Bobby Lewis, director of community development, West Virginia Development Office; Tim Martin, corporate director of health and safety, International Coal Group; Tom Minnich, composites project manager, RCBI; Karen Price, president, West Virginia Manufacturers Association; Guy Peduto, director of commercial programs, ISR Inc.; Cecil Roberts, president, United Mine Workers of America; Kyle Schafer, director, West Virginia Office of Technology; Art Weisberg, chairman, State Electric Supply Co.; and Ronald Wooten, director of the office of Miner's Health, Safety and Training.

MSTC is the major long-range component of the parent project. Other components include developing business incubators and improving training of miners.