

Huesker finds Russian success

ROOF support removal during longwall moves can be a tricky business for many mines, but complications in roof control makes it a risky and drawn-out matter at many Russian operations.

To overcome the safety issue, coal holding company Siberian Business Union looked to Australia to employ the Huesker Longwall Recovery System, designed by Nick Wills of NBW Mining and built by Hunter Mining Methods of New South Wales.

Installed at the company's newest venture – the Salek mine – it was the first time the system had been employed in Russia.

The Salek mine, extracting from the Erunakov's coal deposit in Siberia's Kuzbass region, was opened in late 2004 and produces 3 million tonnes per annum run-of-mine coal.

The low ash and sulfur coal does not require any processing, so after screening it is railed straight to the customer.

Siberian Business Union developed the Salek mine with modern longwall equipment

including a Bucyrus longwall, Eickhoff SL500 shearer and H&B (Germany) AFC.

Having established highly productive longwall technology, Salek mine engineers decided to further improve the technology to eliminate other limitations in the mine's operational efficiency.

It is quite normal for mines in the area to take three months to complete a longwall transfer, usually done through preparing a pre-driven recovery roadway.

As a result of subsequent complications with roof control during removal support, Salek mine management decided to introduce the first Huesker system. A 200m roll of the Huesker system was delivered to Siberia from Australia just before the longwall completed the panel.

The Huesker system was installed under the supervision of NBW Mining.

After a successful installation, the effectiveness of roof support removal was improved by 30% with positive safety

improvements throughout the face transfer.

"We are proud to be first to introduce such new technology for Russian coal mines, [we are] very satisfied with the effective application of the Huesker system and have already decided to purchase another Huesker for next face transfer in 2009," Salek mine manager Igor Borodin said.

NBW's Nick Wills added: "We are very pleased to export Australian know-how into Russia.

"The conditions in Siberia can be extremely challenging (especially the cold weather), but the Russian coal miners were outstanding and they could see the benefits of the Huesker System very quickly. Russian hospitality is second to none."

Siberian Business Union operates 50 enterprises in the Kemerovo and Novosibirsk regions of the Western part of Siberia, with coal mining assets in Kuzbass.

Last year its mines produced 7.5Mtpa with nearly 70% shipped to Western Europe.