



# Link Line

AN UPDATE FROM OMR ON YOUR MINE RESCUE PROGRAM

ISSUE #43 SPRING 2021

## The man behind the stories

### A Retirement

For a lucky few, mine rescue is an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills that may be required to respond to an underground mine emergency. But for a much larger group, for all of us in fact, mine rescue is the assurance that there are people that care enough about our loved ones, livelihoods and communities to volunteer to help them should a mine emergency occur. We build trust in the mining community by maintaining the highest level of training and emergency preparedness, as well as sharing stories, history and current events to highlight the good work done throughout the province of Ontario.

Behind all the hard work to maintain technical standards and communicate with volunteers and mining communities, has been a very passionate and dedicated person. If you've ever wondered who captured photos during a mine rescue competition, or who compiled the training material or the Ontario Mine Rescue (OMR) handbook, who researched and shared the stories and vibrant history of mine rescue, who communicated on social media and the Link Line newsletter. That very dedicated and passionate person was Ken Sitter, the head of program development and communications for the Ontario Mine Rescue program. Despite his best efforts to remain in the background all these years, with his retirement from Ontario Mine Rescue as of the end of 2020, it is time to shine a spotlight on our dear colleague and good friend.

Ken's link to Ontario Mine Rescue began in 1980. As a young man he found himself a spectator at the 1980 Provincial Competition held at the Fort Williams Gardens in Thunder Bay. The 1980 Provincial would mark a double milestone with Linda Bell competing as the first woman in a mine rescue competition, and her UMEX Thierry Mine winning the competition representing Red Lake District. The foreign world of mining and mine rescue came to life for Ken, and little did he know his path would bring him back to that world much later in



Ken waits to greet the competing teams as they exit Red Lake Gold Mines during the historic 70th Provincial Competition in 2019



Ken prepares the live video feed from underground being broadcast on surface for spectators during the 2010 Provincial Competition in Timmins.

life. A long career in journalism eventually saw him put down roots in North Bay, and in 2007 Ken joined the Mines & Aggregates Safety & Health Association (MASHA) which would later become Workplace Safety North (WSN).

After contributing as a writer and working on a variety of program development initiatives within the MASHA mining prevention safety group, Ken was eventually assigned as the permanent dedicated program development resource for Ontario Mine Rescue. He formed an immediate partnership with General Manager Alex Gryska and Supervisor of Mine Rescue Charlie Burton. Despite working alone as the only OMR team member not based out of one of the province's mine rescue stations, Ken found his niche in working with Alex, Charlie and the Mine Rescue Officers learning not only the current technical developments of the mine rescue program, but also the long and storied history. He inherited duties as author of the Link Line newsletter, contributed to the success photo documentation of community events like competitions, and made a point to meet mine rescue volunteers and record their interesting stories and perspectives.

The retirement of Ken Sitter was not just the loss of Ontario Mine Rescue's writer, it was the loss of a student of mining and mine rescue history, and a passionate teacher of the subject. Ken's knowledge and expertise by the time of his retirement was surpassed only by his interest in sharing mine rescue news, the latest updates, historical flashbacks and human interest stories to keep volunteers and their families connected.



# Ebbinghaus westward bound

Chief Emergency Services Officer Tim Ebbinghaus has announced his retirement from the Ontario Mine Rescue program and Workplace Safety North as of July 2021. This year marks Tim's 24th with Ontario Mine Rescue, spanning his work as volunteer responder to Mine Rescue Officer.

Tim received his Basic/Standard Mine Rescue training in 1998 while with Windsor Salt Ojibway Mine in the Southern District. He served as an active volunteer for 14 years responding to mine emergencies in his District, notably including the 2011 Goderich Mine tornado response which paired his Windsor team with Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (HUSAR) in a difficult mutual aid response. A passionate leader of the province's southern-most mine rescue team, Tim won seven Southern District Mine Rescue Competitions as a volunteer. In 2012, Tim pulled up stakes from his home in Windsor and joined Ontario Mine Rescue as the Thunder Bay & Algoma District Mine Rescue Officer. Following the retirement of Sudbury District Mine Rescue Officer Bruce Hall, Tim moved to the Sudbury District and took over District training. As a Mine Rescue Officer, Tim trained the Vale West Mine Rescue team that won the 2015 Provincial Competition.

He later took on a new challenge as an Emergency Services Specialist Mine Rescue Officer, before becoming the province's first Chief Emergency Services Officer. Tim's work in this role, while overseeing a mine rescue program without any funding support, is a testament to a passion for mine rescue work that we all aspire to. In Ontario, his team identified mine emergency response improvements and worked to assist mine operators in expanding their capabilities to surface facilities beyond the underground collar or portal. From training Surface Emergency Response Teams (or underground teams with expanded skills) for mills, smelters and open pit mines to his work to equip sites with equipment unique to their circumstances,

Tim's team built upon the solid foundation started by the late Shawn Kirwan before him.

Tim was critical in the development of the OMR Digital Communications and Record System (tablet) project as well as its pioneering use at the 2016 International Mine Rescue Competition (IMRC) and introduction to the global mine rescue community at the 2017 International Mine Rescue Body (IMRB) Conference. His work with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador made significant strides within provincial mine rescue program and he held OMR's role as the outside auditor of their mine site rescue programs, standards and trainers. In addition, his team's work with Vale's Sid Pain established one of the largest, most remote and challenging mine rescue programs at the Voisey's Bay Mine. In his spare time, Tim was the driving force in the establishment, training and global success of the Laurentian University Student Mine Rescue Team whose alumni join the mining sector as young leaders in the field of health and safety.

However, it is his last and most recent contribution that will leave a historical mark on the program. Tim's work as Chief Emergency Services Officer was the critical proof of concept to enable the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to expand the mandate of Ontario Mine Rescue by funding all mine emergency preparedness activities including surface facilities and operations.

We would like to thank Tim for the many years he has spent as an example of the true spirit of the Ontario Mine Rescue program, as well as demonstrating dedication to that cause beyond expectation. While this announcement may have read like an obituary, we can assure you Tim is alive and well, and looking forward to what is to come. Please do take a moment to thank Tim and wish him and his family well on their new adventure out west.



CLIPBOARDS READY - Mine rescue volunteers hope to be under the watchful eye of judges again sometime soon.

# Standardized Evaluation

As the Ontario Mine Rescue program and mine operators continue to maintain the top priority of emergency readiness and response capability at all operating mines during the pandemic, a close eye is also being kept on whether or not the annual standardized evaluation (competition) will be able to go forward in 2021. Last year saw the event cancelled for the first time in the 70 year history as the pandemic limited access for volunteers to training time and equipment use. Once protocols were established by mine operators and the mine rescue program, the remaining time in 2020 was used to ensure all 900 volunteers caught up on new program developments and completed enough training time under oxygen.

However, in addition to losing the much loved community engagement and celebration that a competition brings, the cancellation also meant the loss of a portion of advanced training and leadership development that comes along with the challenge of the standardized evaluation. While not everybody gets the opportunity to represent their mine operation in competition, those that do take on significant responsibility to become specialists in mine rescue work. Their growth as leaders and representatives of their coworkers is evident in the countless hours of preparation that goes into not only tackling a mine emergency simulation, but demonstrating the safest, fastest and most effective way to do it. This extra knowledge and skills development not only ensures that the mine will succeed during evaluation, but more importantly, that during the next emergency that mine can call on current and former competition participants to ensure the highest standards are met by every team that responds to a call-out.

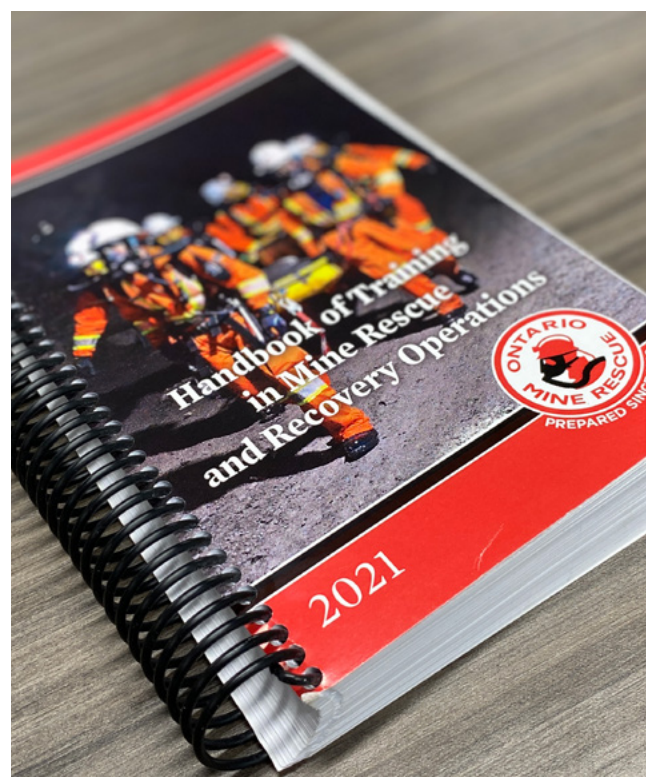
There is a shared respect between the Ontario Mine Rescue program and mine operators for the competition process and the benefits it brings to our program. There is an interest in exploring all options in 2021 to determine whether some form of a safe evaluation can take place, however the guiding framework will be public health guidance first and not the other way around. The state of the pandemic during the early part of 2021 meant that the typical May/June window for any variation would not be suitable, which means that planning and preparation of options will pause with an eye on early fall for status-check on the situation.

## Handbook

A preliminary update to the Ontario Mine Rescue Handbook of Training in Mine Rescue and Recovery Operations was published at the end of 2020. A limited run of printed copies have now made their way into the hands of Ontario's mine rescue volunteers, and an electronic version is currently available online. For those eager to navigate the book via smartphone, the ePub format is recommended:

<https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/resources/mine-rescue-training-handbook>

Following the current initial roll-out and feedback period, a revised document incorporating any necessary corrections and edits will be scheduled for an expanded print run this summer to be ready for fall distribution.



A familiar document gets a few upgrades .



**Photo ID Challenge** - Help OMR identify mines, faces and dates to catalogue these photos from our historical archive. Email [info@OntarioMineRescue.com](mailto:info@OntarioMineRescue.com)  
**Above:** Possibly the 1974 Timmins District Competition winners from the Langmuir Mine (District Mine Rescue Officer Jack Armstrong front-row-center)  
**Below:** Unidentified team and year from Onaping or Sudbury Districts.



**WORKPLACE SAFETY NORTH**

Head office (North Bay)  
 (705) 474 7233

**President & CEO**

Paul Andre ext. 275  
[paulandre@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:paulandre@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**ONTARIO MINE RESCUE**

**SUDBURY OFFICE**

(705) 670 5707

**Vice President, Ontario Mine Rescue**

Ted Hanley (705) 690 0928  
[tedhanley@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:tedhanley@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Chief Mine Rescue Officer**

Shawn Rideout (705) 665 6933  
[shawnrideout@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:shawnrideout@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Chief Emergency Services Officer**

Tim Ebbinghaus ext. 316  
[timebbinghaus@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:timebbinghaus@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Executive Assistant**

Penny Pagan ext. 321  
[pennypagan@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:pennypagan@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Mine Rescue Assistant**

Becky Barrett ext. 325  
[beckybarrett@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:beckybarrett@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**MINE RESCUE OFFICERS**

**Algoma Station**

(888) 730 7821

Mike Krell ext. 357  
[michaekrell@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:michaekrell@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

Ted Greenwood ext. 351  
[tedgreenwood@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:tedgreenwood@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Kirkland Lake Station**

(888) 730 7821

Wayne Baker ext. 313  
[waynebaker@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:waynebaker@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

Shawn Shail ext. 360  
[shawnsail@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:shawnsail@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Sudbury and Onaping Stations**

(705) 670 5707

Dan Davidson ext. 329  
[dandavidson@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:dandavidson@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

Jeff Farquharson ext. 344  
[jefffarquharson@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:jefffarquharson@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

Scott Gillett ext. 352  
[scottgillett@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:scottgillett@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Red Lake Station**

(888) 730 7821

Grant Saunders ext. 312  
[grantsaunders@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:grantsaunders@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Southern Ontario Station**

(888) 730 7821

Dan Rulli ext. 359  
[danrulli@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:danrulli@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

Matt VandenHeuvel ext. 331  
[mattvandenheuvel@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:mattvandenheuvel@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Thunder Bay Station**

(888) 730 7821

Duane Crowell ext. 311  
[duanecrowell@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:duanecrowell@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

**Timmins Station**

(705) 235 4861

Danny Taillefer  
[dannytaillefer@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:dannytaillefer@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

Jason Leger  
[jasonleger@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:jasonleger@workplacesafetynorth.ca)

Mat Johnson  
[matjohnson@workplacesafetynorth.ca](mailto:matjohnson@workplacesafetynorth.ca)



**ABOUT THE ONTARIO MINE RESCUE NEWSLETTER**

The Ontario Mine Rescue newsletter is published three times per year by Workplace Safety North (WSN). WSN is funded by workplaces in the province through premiums paid to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The information in this publication is accurate to the best of our knowledge. However, the association assumes no responsibility or liability for the accuracy or sufficiency of this information, nor does it endorse any product mentioned herein with the exception of those produced by Workplace Safety North.