



Powered by Clickability

West Virginia tests 9 coal miners' air packs; all fail

(CNN) -- In a random test of nine emergency air packs used by West Virginia coal miners, all nine failed, the state's Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training said Thursday.

The CSE SR-100 is manufactured by Pennsylvania-based CSE Corp., which came under scrutiny after the lone survivor of the Sago Mine disaster sued it and other companies that supplied equipment used in the West Virginia mine.

Randy McCloy Jr., one of 13 men trapped after a January 2 explosion, spent 41 hours in the mine. The other 12 miners died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The lawsuit against CSE, filed last week, alleges that four of the air packs used by the miners were defective. However, CSE issued a statement Wednesday saying state investigators determined that each respirator was functioning properly.

CSE President Scott Shearer wouldn't say whether the Sago miners used SR-100s because of an ongoing federal investigation.

The state mining agency issued an alert on the SR-100s after selecting 17 of them at random and testing nine of them. All failed a test of their oxygen-starting cartridges, said Caryn Gresham, a spokeswoman for the agency. The failed tests indicate the devices would delay the release of vital oxygen for 15 to 20 minutes

"The air packs tested were made in 1998 prior to the installation of heat damage devices, which were installed only from 2004. The 1998 air packs purchased by our agency have a shelf life of 10 years," Gresham said.

In 2004 CSE included heat detection devices on its air packs to indicate whether the device was deteriorating, which can happen if they are exposed to extreme temperature fluctuations.

Gresham added that "air packs may have been stored inside vehicles and exposed to extreme temperature changes, causing possible heat damage."

Shearer defended the devices.

"With any breathing apparatus, you have temperature guidelines that the manufacturer gives," he said. "This is no different to if GM tells you to change your oil every 3,000 miles. If you follow the guidelines then you should be fine."

CNN's Rossanna Shokrian contributed to this report.

Find this article at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/09/01/miner.oxygen/index.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.