

An Innovative Approach to Mine Shaft Sinking

As a result of the success Wardrop's mining division has had sinking mine shafts in Mexico, senior mining engineer Ivan Arriagada says he wouldn't be surprised to see Wardrop open a Mexican office at some point in the future.

According to Ivan, mine shaft sinking has been the domain of a limited number of specialized contractors around the world. When the market is on the upswing, he says it's sometimes difficult to secure these contractors to a project and they often come at a high price.

Ivan says one of Wardrop's clients, Peñoles, one of Mexico's largest mining companies, was in this situation as the price to bring in a foreign contractor to sink a mine shaft was becoming too unrealistic for the small ore body they were looking to mine.

To circumvent this problem, Ivan approached Peñoles in October 2005 and suggested using a local contractor and training their workforce with Wardrop

providing the engineering, site training and site management.

Ivan says the idea was readily accepted by Peñoles and in no time Wardrop officials were in Mexico discussing the Saucito project.

The engineering work commenced in January 2006 and by late July the local contractor was ready to start shaft sinking near the city of Fresnillo in central Mexico.

To date Wardrop has sunk a shaft 450 metres deep and the project is still going strong.

Ivan says Peñoles has plans to start mining three additional ore bodies in the vicinity of the Saucito mine and Wardrop will be counted on to play a major role.

He adds the project will benefit Wardrop's mining division which can start gaining experience working on relatively small-scale engineering, procurement and construction management (EPCM) projects before taking on more complex work.

