

## Man Impaled by Steel Pipe Saved by Rescue Team

The night of July 11, 1999 started out like any other for Partizansk, Russia, native Evgeny Skorenko. The 45-year-old machinist was driving home to his wife and two sons when, as he explains it, “All of a sudden, another car darted into my lane . . . I think he was trying to avoid a pothole. He was coming straight at me and his lights were blinding.” Evgeny was forced to swerve off the road to avoid the speeding vehicle. “The next thing I remember is the crash. Then a young couple came up to the window asking if I needed an ambulance. I said I did, so they ran off to phone for one at a nearby clothing factory.”

Still dazed from the impact, Evgeny tried to get out of his car, but couldn’t seem to move. Looking down he discovered the horrifying reason why—his automobile had collided with an improvised guide rail made from a huge, discarded mining drill and the sharp steel spike had pierced his car impaling him to his seat. “I saw the metal boring pipe where it went into my stomach—thank God it missed my spine—and I noticed that my intestines were spilling out of the wound and onto the floor in front of me, so I leaned down and gathered them into a pile as best I could,” he explains matter-of-factly. “Then I waited for help to arrive.” What Evgeny didn’t know at the time was that the metal pipe had literally skewered the car like a piece of meat, passing through the front and exiting behind him to stick out nearly two meters at the rear of the vehicle.

The police arrived on the scene first, followed by an ambulance crew. “The doctor gave me an injection and I started fading in and out of consciousness then, but I do remember people talking about how they would get me out of the car, discussing what equipment could be used to cut the metal shaft and how to go about it without making my pain and suffering even worse,” he explains.

Realizing that extracting Evgeny from his car would require more specialized rescue equipment, the dispatcher called the Partizansk Military Mountain Rescue Team to the scene. Highly skilled in the most difficult rescue and recovery operations—the team is routinely sent to rescue miners

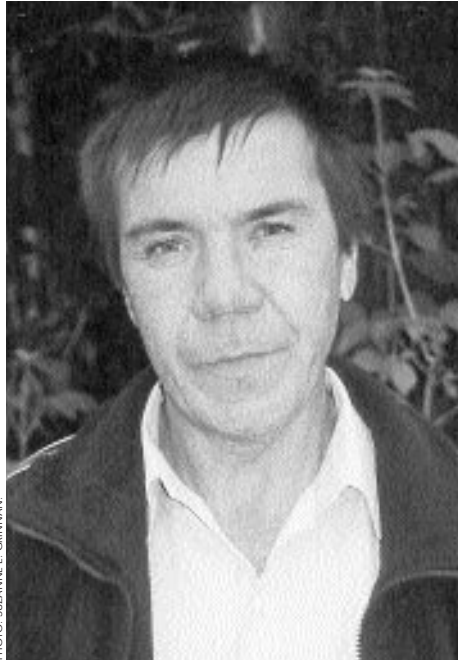


PHOTO: SUZANNE E. GRINNAN

Thanks to the concerted efforts of highly-skilled paramedics and emergency rescue specialists, Evgeny Skorenko survived a devastating automobile accident three years ago.

trapped by an explosion or people stuck in a collapsed building—the crew on duty responded immediately. Working like a finely-tuned instrument, the three-man crew quickly assessed Evgeny’s situation and started the task of extricating him from the wreckage, while the ambulance team administered first aid.

With an intravenous drip of analgesics helping him bear the pain and the ambulance crew tending to him, Evgeny steered himself for the worst part—when the Rescue Team had to cut the pipe. “It was very bad then because, as they were cutting the metal, there was inevitably a lot of motion and jarring and I was suffering quite a bit even though the ambulance doctor gave me injections of Novocain to make it less torturous for me,” he acknowledges.

Finally, after two agonizing hours, the rescue workers freed Evgeny and prepared him for transport to the hospital. He spent more than two months in intensive care as the surgeons worked to heal his injuries

When first-responders are called to the scene of an accident, they must be prepared to deal with countless potentially deadly situations. Whether for ambulance crews, rescue teams, or military medical units, AIHA’s network of 16 partnership Emergency Medical Services Training Centers (EMSTCs) play a critical role in upgrading the urgent care skills necessary to effectively manage critical situations in the NIS and CEE. This is the story of a Russian man who survived a devastating automobile accident because of the skilled care he received; the story of the rescue team who helped save him is on the other side.

and, three years later, says he feels fine. An avid gardener, he is healthy and limber enough to plant and harvest potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, cucumbers, and eggplant, among other things.

“Thankfully, I don’t remember much about the accident,” he states, explaining that he thinks this is his mind’s way of coping with the trauma. What he does remember, however, is how the first-responders pulled together to get him out of the car and save his life. “I used to work in a nearby mine, so I knew that these specialized rescue teams existed. What I hadn’t realized was that they could be called upon to help in so many other emergency situations. And, I can’t thank them—and the others who responded—enough for saving my life.

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## Specialized Training Gives Rescue Team Life-saving Skills

In a coal town like Partizansk, a city of 60,000 nestled in the foothills of Russia's far eastern Primorsky Krai, a skilled emergency response network is an absolute necessity for the region's miners who labor day in and day out to keep the once-thriving industry afloat and eke out a meager living for themselves and their families. Dangerous under the best of circumstances, mining in the region—and throughout Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia—is plagued by financial constraints that have seemingly made safety issues an afterthought. For the Partizansk Military Mountain Rescue Team, this makes rescue missions following a collapse, explosion, or other accident at one of the area's working mines a top priority.

"Our work is very dangerous," admits Alexander Nechunayev, leader of the mobile unit of the Partizansk Team. "We risk our lives each time we respond to a call and so, when we are on duty, we must be at a constant state of alert." Members are also commonly called to the scene of fires—especially when people are trapped. "We are used to working under conditions fraught with noxious gasses or heavy smoke and we have special respirators that allow us to breathe as we work to get people out to safety," he explains.

"We originally had 10 units, but with fewer mines operating these days the industry cannot support that many," states the 26-year veteran of underground rescue operations. "So, now there are three teams who cover Siberia and the Far East," he continues, explaining that each of these teams consists of a lead person, a driver, and four rescue specialists. The units work 36-hour shifts—24 of those hours are on-duty and the remaining half-day is spent on rigorous

training exercises conducted both in the mines and above ground. "During the training sessions, we work to upgrade our skills on various rescue, recovery, and salvage equipment. We also play out different scenarios so we are well-prepared for whatever we might be faced with when we respond to an emergency call."

In addition to their rescue capabilities, members of the mobile unit are also experienced emergency medics. Respiratory spe-



PHOTO: BY SUZANNE E. GRINNAN

Partizansk Military Mountain Rescue Team leader Alexander Nechunayev and respiratory specialists Gennady Klimov and Sergey Andreev are regularly called to the scene of mine explosions, fires, and other disaster situations. They have all taken specialized emergency medicine courses at the Vladivostok EMS Training Center.

cialist Gennady Klimov—a team member since 1986—explains that they have all trained at the Vladivostok EMSTC, which was created through AIHA's now-graduated Vladivostok/Richmond partnership. They hone their skills with monthly refresher courses—sometimes at the Training Center, other times locally. "We've all become much more adept at setting broken bones, performing CPR, intubating victims, applying tourniquets, and many other first aid procedures," Klimov notes.

It was this unique combination of EMS and rescue skills that prompted the emergency dispatcher to call Nechunayev's unit to the scene of a terrible accident that left Evgeny Skorenko trapped in his car, impaled to the seat by a length of steel pipe. "In Mr. Skorenko's case, the situation was described to us before hand, so we knew

In addition to training in general emergent care—spinal immobilization and cardiac resuscitation, for example—AIHA's Emergency Medical Services Training Centers (EMSTCs) also offer classes targeted to the needs of their individual communities. In Vladivostok, Russia, for example, specialized courses teach members of the Partizansk Military Mountain Rescue Teams various techniques they can use when they are called to a disaster at one of the region's many coal mines. This is the story of one team who used their skills to help save a man impaled by a metal pipe; the story of the man they helped is on the other side.

exactly what equipment we should bring," Nechunayev states, pointing out, "Our objective was to get him out, but of course we wanted to cause him the least pain and additional trauma as possible."

As the Rescue Team worked using hydraulic metal-cutters to first remove the seat, then slice through the metal pipe that protruded from Skorenko's stomach, the ambulance crew administered intravenous painkillers and did their best to distract the injured man. They finally succeeded in freeing him and he was rushed to the hospital.

"This accident was horrible but, in the mines, the injuries we see are even more serious," Nechunayev concludes, noting that working above ground was almost calm in comparison to the bedlam that exists when a mine shaft collapses on dozens of men. "We responded to a mine explosion recently. Many miners were injured—four severely—and one man was killed. We were working in the stifling dust and darkness, trying to get them out and the fear that there might be another explosion was always there in the back of our minds. But, we did our job then just as we did when we helped Mr. Skorenko. Hope is the last thing to die, and we hope all of the people we work on live."

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