

# Rope access team repairs coronal capping of smokestack



AFTER prolonged exposure to regular lightning strikes had caused structural damage to the tip of a 106m-high smokestack located at a copper mine in Phalaborwa, rope access specialist Skyriders was contracted to complete the repair work.

Skyriders marketing manager Mike Zinn explains that a team of five rope access specialists successfully repaired the steel lightning protection capping on the top of the structure, which protects the top of the smoke stack, within eight days

in May 2015.

“With issues like lightning strikes, high winds, thermal variations and the velocity of the exhaust gases from the stack the capping can become misaligned. Our task was to realign the various stainless steel components, before welding it to a belt to secure it safely. The biggest challenge was accurately welding the steel at such height, however, this obstacle was easily overcome as the Skyriders team boasts in-depth skills and experience in this regard,” he states.

Zinn reveals that Skyriders was contracted for this project, due to the company’s previous successes at the same mine over the past three years. “In the past, we have done maintenance on the reinforcing rings on the same stack, and have also successfully installed access systems on the cooling tower during concrete repairs and reinforcements. What’s more, we have done inspection on the internal linings on the smoke stacks and installed fall arrest systems on the ladders.”

Given the ongoing

success at this project, and many similar ones located across Africa, Zinn is optimistic of the future outlook for Skyriders in the mining industry. “Rope access is a safer and more cost-effective alternative to the more traditional means of access on tall structures, as it applies practical rope work to enable workers to access difficult-to-reach locations with greater ease. This has made rope access increasingly popular in numerous industries, including mining,” he concludes.