

## **Blaschak production on rise, exports may be too**

Blaschak Coal, a Pennsylvania anthracite coal producer, is boosting production, hunting for additional reserves and pushing to make increased inroads into the European export market, Greg Driscoll, the company's chairman and CEO, said Friday.

"Things are going pretty well," he said in an interview. "We're pretty much on target on production" for 2012. Mining this year "has turned out in some cases better than expected."

So far in 2012, the big news for Blaschak has been its Latimer mine in Luzerne County. "We were in startup mode last year," Driscoll recalled.

"This will be more or less a full year of production. We're planning to do about 150,000 (short tons) out of Latimer in 2012. We were probably less than 100,000 st last year."

Blaschak, which also operates the smaller Centralia and Primrose mines, is running two production shifts, a total of 18 hours a day, at Latimer.

Blaschak has a brokerage relationship with Integrity Coal Sales that Driscoll said "has been good for us." Blaschak currently ships some anthracite coal – he would not say how much – into the European steel market.

"We're now in conversations with [coal sales] trials in 2013, and those would be export sales" into Europe as well, he said, although not for steel production. "There are a couple of new interesting applications that we don't know if they will come to fruition."

Driscoll said the company is "looking for more mine sites that we could work, continuing to look to add reserves." If it develops another mine, the company probably would add another processing plant as well to handle the increased tonnage.

Eventually, he said, Blaschak would like its annual production to be in the range of 500,000 to 600,000 st.

While anthracite markets face some challenges, "they have not had the volatility" that bituminous steam coal is grappling with, he said.

— Bob Matyi