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## Narrow-vein mining technique sparks interest in South Africa

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Representatives of Canadian exploration junior Rocmec are currently in South Africa, where they are holding discussions with mining companies and contractors regarding the company's patented thermal fragmentation mining method.

Rocmec investor relations manager **John Stella** tells *Mining Weekly* that significant interest in thermal fragmentation among South Africans was initially sparked after a Rocmec presentation at the third annual symposium on narrow-vein and reef mining, held in Johannesburg earlier this year.

CEO **Donald Brisebois** says that, given the substantial dilution that occurs during blasting, there is a need to develop a mining technique that reduces ore dilution and development costs to make the mining of high-grade, narrow-vein ore deposits more profitable.

"High-grade, narrow-vein deposit mining is a predominant field of activity in the precious metals mining sector. But the principal factor that has under-mined the profitability and effectiveness of mining such ore zones is the substantial dilution that occurs during blasting," says Brisebois.

Unless narrow, precious-metal vein deposits are of a significant width, usually 1 m or greater, or of a high grade, they are often overlooked because it is uneconomical to mine them using conventional mining methods.

The thermal fragmentation mining method allows for selective ore extraction, and high-grade sections can be prioritised and extracted first. The method extracts a narrow corridor, leaving waste walls on each side of the mineralised zone intact, and causes less damage to the drift structure.

This mining technique has environmental advantages, reduces the quantity of chemical agents needed during the milling process to extract the precious metals, and uses less energy. It is a continuous mining method that does not use explosives, says Brisebois.

"The technology is positioned to meet the growing challenges of skilled-labour shortages, tougher environmental guidelines, and

the depletion of traditional large-scale ore deposits mined using conventional methods. As the technology continues to develop and spread throughout the mining community, the objective remains to optimise the productivity and profitability of mining narrow, high-grade precious-metal orebodies and to make a substantial, lasting contribution to this sector," comments Brisebois.

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