



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Virginia Department of Energy

Washington Building / 8th Floor
1100 Bank Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219-3638
(804) 692-3200
www.energy.virginia.gov

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Tarah Kesterson

(276) 356-3405

tarah.kesterson@energy.virginia.gov

Wellmore Coal Company Takes Top Prize at Virginia Mine Rescue Event

Abingdon, Va. – Wellmore Coal Company took the top award after two mine rescue contests were held over three days at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon. Ten teams competed to be the best in a test of skills. The contests serve as crucial training for these coal miners that serve as first responders to underground mine emergencies.

The event was co-hosted by National Mine Rescue Association (NMRA) Post 7, the Metallurgical Coal Producers Association (MCPA), the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and the Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy). Two separate contests were held within the three days. The 37th Annual Governor's Cup and the 2nd Annual Overmountain Mine Rescue contests both took place.

"We are grateful to not have to put these teams to use but are confident should a major emergency happen, they would be ready to respond," **said Virginia Energy Director of Coal Programs Randy Moore.** "This agency ranks worker safety as its top priority, and we are glad to join with partners to ensure there is another layer of protection should our miners find themselves in harm's way."

"This joint contest effort is truly a unique opportunity for coal company mine rescue teams by combining the contests," **said MCPA Chairman J.P. Richardson.** "As a result of this partnership, the industry's mine rescue teams can compete in two contests at the same location and individual miners can take part in special events like the skills contest, in one three-day period."

"These miners that volunteer to serve on the team deserve all our gratitude," **said NMRA Post 7 President Gwendolyn Jessee.** "There is fierce competition on the field but

comradery like none other when the contest ends. We are honored to host the opportunity for them to showcase their skills and grow their friendships.”

Day one and two of the competition featured the team competition. The field adjacent to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center was set up to emulate underground mines. Within each field were a set of problems which the teams had to work together to solve in the least amount of time. Mine Rescue teams were asked to rescue trapped miners, make sure the air quality underground was restored, put out fires and ensure the safety of all their fellow teammates throughout the competition. The teams are required to wear the breathing apparatuses while completing the problem.

The third day tested skills in First Aid, Team Tech, Pre-shift and bench. The bench competition requires miners to identify issues within breathing apparatuses used by the mine rescue teams. A Team Tech skills competition allows miners demonstrate how to ensure air quality underground is safe. The Pre-Shift competition tests the skill of underground mine foremen.

Below is a list of winners from the three day mine rescue and skills contest:

Grand Champion: **Wellmore Coal Company**
Governor’s Cup Mine Rescue: **Wellmore Coal Company**
Overmountain Mine Rescue: **Wellmore Coal Company**
Pre-shift: **Paramont Contura (Joey Sykes)**
First Aid: **Paramont Contura**
BG-4 Bench: **Brad Hawkins (Paramont Contura)**
240-R Bench: **Josh Chambers (Arch Mountain Laurel)**
Team Tech: **Paramont Contura (Adam Philips and Joey Sykes)**

Miners from Affinity Mine Complex, Arch Mountain Laurel, Buchanan Minerals, LLC, Coking Coal, Iron Senergy, Paramont Contura, Southern Pocahontas, Virginia Small Operators Mine Rescue, Wellmore Coal Company and WVU Extension competed in the three day event. It was sponsored by Jenmar, Drager, Wellmore Coal Company, CSE Company and United Central Industrial Supply.