

# News Release



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## Mine Rescue Contest Prepares Teams for Real-Life Emergencies

**ST. CLAIRSVILLE, Ohio** – In the event of a mine fire, roof collapse or explosion, mine rescue teams may be tapped to search for colleagues disoriented by toxic gas, trapped beneath layers of rock or severely injured.

The teams undergo rigorous training to develop skills that oftentimes save lives. Those skills will be put to the test June 13-15 during the 25th annual Ohio Valley Mine Rescue Contest at the Belmont County Fairgrounds in St. Clairsville, Ohio. The contest is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and will feature 26 teams competing from around the country.

"Rescue and recovery efforts that took place earlier this year at the Sago, Aracoma and Darby mines underscore the importance of having well-trained mine rescue teams ready and willing to assist in the event of a mine disaster," said David G. Dye, acting administrator for MSHA. "These competitions enable rescue teams to practice their skills under pressure and within time constraints, so that they will be better prepared and well-equipped when called upon during a real mine emergency."

The contest consists of several events. In the "field" competition, teams solve a hypothetical mine emergency problem while judges rate them on how well they adhere to mine rescue procedures and how quickly they complete specific tasks. For the "benchman" event, individuals who maintain rescue equipment must thoroughly inspect breathing devices and gas equipment and quickly correct all defects. In the first aid contest, emergency medical technicians tackle real-life scenarios, and in the "pre-shift" contest, individuals must ensure that the mine environment is safe before allowing the next shift of workers to enter.

Mine rescue figures prominently in sweeping new legislation passed recently by both the House and Senate. The Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006, or MINER Act, calls for mine rescue teams to participate at least annually in two local mine rescue contests and in mine rescue training at the underground coal mine covered by the rescue team. It also requires that, in the event of an emergency, mine rescue teams be available at the mine within one hour ground travel time from the mine rescue station.

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

|                 |                   |                     |                      |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Tues., June 13  | First Aid Contest | Begins at Noon      | Farmers Market Bldg. |
| Wed., June 14   | Field Contest     | Begins at 8 a.m.    | Football Field       |
| Thurs., June 15 | Benchman Contest  | Begins at 8 a.m.    | Recreation Center    |
| Thurs., June 15 | Pre-shift Contest | Begins at 8:30 a.m. | Football Field       |

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