

News Release



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MSHA to sponsor National Electrical Troubleshooting Contest

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) will hold its second ever National Electrical Troubleshooting Contest for qualified or certified mine electricians working in the coal sector on Nov. 15 at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beckley, W.Va. At present, contestants from Alabama, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia have signed up to compete.

“There are at least 300 separate standards relating to electrical safety,” said Richard E. Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “Since most mining equipment is electrical, this contest will help enhance electrical safety in coal mining.”

Contest participants will work on “safe voltage” equipment to hone their electrical skills. Simulated power centers and electric face equipment that typically appear in mines will be used as work stations to stage common mine problems. For instance, contestants may be told that the continuous mining machine or roof bolting machine broke down and needs immediate repair. Electricians will then perform troubleshooting and testing on these power centers and electric face equipment to solve specific problems.

In addition, contestants will be required to take a written exam on electrical laws and standards.

Since 1990, there have been at least 108 fatal and 2,413 non-fatal accidents in the mining industry that were electrical in nature. Most could have been prevented if the circuits had been locked, grounded and tagged prior to the performance of maintenance work.

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