

News Release



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When disaster strikes underground, mine rescue teams spur to action *Nearly 90 teams to compete in simulated coal mine emergency*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Mine rescue teams may be tapped to battle mine fires, contain underground floods and rescue their colleagues trapped beneath layers of rock following an explosion. They undergo rigorous training to develop skills they hope they will never need to use. From Aug. 31 to Sept. 3, those skills will be put to the test during the 2009 National Mine Rescue, First Aid, Bench and Preshift Competition at the Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville. Nearly 90 teams from 13 states will compete in the biennial event sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration.

“Mining tragedies bring home to us in a monumental way how essential these teams are to the safety and well-being of miners in this country,” said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. “Even in competition, mine rescue team members hold themselves to the highest of standards.”

The contest consists of several events. In the field competition, teams must 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.

Other events include a bench contest, where individuals who maintain rescue equipment must thoroughly inspect breathing devices that have been tampered with and correct defects quickly. In the first-aid contest, participants must demonstrate the correct method of caring for an injured miner. In the pre-shift competition, miners examine the mine layout area before their work shift to identify and eliminate existing hazards.

Mine rescue training began in the United States in 1910, the first year of the U.S. Bureau of Mines. Joseph A. Holmes, the bureau’s first director, sought a training tool that would provide the mining industry with a cadre of mine rescue specialists prepared to respond to mine disasters. The training efforts evolved into local and regional competitions and, a year later, a national contest.

Schedule of Events

Aug. 31	First aid and bench competition
Sept. 1 and 2	Mine rescue field competition
Sept. 3	Pre-shift examination competition and awards banquet

For a complete list of participating teams, visit <http://www.msha.gov>.

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