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 @WIPPNews

WIPP UPDATE: April 15, 2016

WIPP Blue Mine Rescue Team Wins Local Competition

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Blue mine rescue team took top honors last week in the Southwest Regional Mine Rescue Contest, held in Carlsbad, NM. The WIPP Blue outdueled five other teams from the region, including the defending national champion WIPP Red team, to win first place overall in the competition. WIPP's Red team took first place in the first aid competition.



Federal law requires every operating mine in the United States to have access to two mine rescue teams. Mine rescuers are highly-trained specialists with life-saving skills they hope they'll never need to use. In addition to rescue capabilities, WIPP's Blue and Red mine rescue teams support (and are supported by) personnel from area potash mines through Memorandums of Understanding. This ensures that mines in the same region have access to capable, highly-trained personnel in the event of an emergency.

Mine rescue competitions are designed to sharpen skills and test the knowledge of team members who would be called on to respond to a mine emergency. The contests require team members to solve hypothetical mine emergency problems (such as fires, explosions or cave-ins) while being timed and observed by judges from the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

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Teams are tested on knowledge of mine gases, ventilation, first-aid, mine recovery, and fire-fighting. Points are deducted according to the types and seriousness of infractions. In other words, teams are penalized more for life-threatening mistakes than for minor procedural mistakes.

At WIPP and most other mines, mine rescue team members consist of volunteers who report to work every day, performing normal tasks. The teams are composed of hoisting supervisors, mechanics, waste handlers, mining operators, and other occupations. Teams practice and prepare for the day they are called to a real emergency. These volunteers devote countless hours, both before and after work, honing their skills.

In real emergencies, the lives of mine rescue team members and their co-workers depend on the proficiency of each individual's skill and training.

Blue Team: Heath Fowler, Ed Keyser, Ty Zimmerly, Kirk Nance, Nico Dominguez, Lance Tunbow, Gary Kessler and Manny Marquez.

Red Team: Matt Ridgway, Mark Long, Fabian Carrasco, Matt Carnathan, Justin Bailey, Tony Mihelic, Aaron Ballew and Kelly Burke.

WIPP EOC Ribbon Cutting Video On-Line

Last week WIPP celebrated the opening of the new state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center with a ribbon cutting that was attended by New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez, local dignitaries from the City and Carlsbad and Lea/Eddy County and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management. Video of the ceremony is available at the following link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvfgIGc4T3I&feature=youtu.be>.

April 7 WIPP Town Hall Meeting Available On-Line

The April 7 WIPP Town Hall Meeting is now available on-line at: <http://livestream.com/rvv/events/5145942>.