



News Release

Connect with DOL at
<http://social.dol.gov!>



U.S. Department of Labor For Immediate Release
Office of Public Affairs
Chicago, Ill.
Release Number: 11-1429-NAT

Sept. 30, 2011
Contact: Amy Louviere
Phone: 202-693-9423
Email: louviere.amy@dol.gov

Coal mine rescue teams put emergency skills to the test *National competition marks 100 years and 60 since it was last held in Columbus, Ohio*

ARLINGTON, Va. – 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. Those skills will be put to the test Oct. 3-6 during the 2011 National Mine Rescue, First-Aid, Bench and Preshift Competition at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio.

More than 100 teams from at least 13 states – including Alabama, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming – will compete in the biennial event sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration. The last time the competition was held in Columbus was in 1951.

“The critical importance of mine rescue teams was underscored with last year’s tragedy at Upper Big Branch Mine,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “Having been at the scene of too many mining accidents, I know firsthand the need for well-trained and experienced mine rescue teams. I have the highest respect for these men and women, and am deeply grateful for their sacrifices.”

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, in which 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 under 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 disasters. Training efforts evolved into local and regional competitions and, a year later, a national contest held in Pittsburgh, Pa. Among the 15,000 attendees was then-President William H. Taft.

Schedule of Events

Oct. 3 first-aid and bench competition
Oct. 4 and 5 mine rescue field competition
Oct. 6 pre-shift examination competition and awards banquet

For a list of participating teams, the complete agenda and additional information, visit <http://www.msha.gov>.

###

U.S. Department of Labor news materials are accessible at <http://www.dol.gov>. The information above is available in large print, Braille, audio tape or disc from the COAST office upon request by calling 202-693-7828 or TTY 202-693-7755.