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WIPP UPDATE: October 8, 2015

WIPP's Mine Rescue Team Wins Top Honors at National Competition

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Blue Mine Rescue team competed in the Missouri Regional Underground Mine Rescue Competition last week bringing home top honors in the field and first aid competitions. They also took the "Best Out of State" and the Governor's traveling trophy. The competition included 22 nationally ranked mine rescue teams representing Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Louisiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

WIPP has two mine rescue teams, designated as the Blue and Red teams. In an underground facility like WIPP, rescue teams must be prepared to respond to underground emergencies that require locating individuals as well as treatment and extraction. During the February 5, 2014 salt truck fire, mine rescue team members were the first to re-enter the WIPP underground, after the initial evacuation. The teams are made up of volunteers who regularly compete at various national competitions to enhance their mine rescue skills.

This year's annual competition in Missouri included written exams to test member's knowledge and field first aid and technician competitions to test hands-on skills in a realistic mine rescue environment. The competition was held in actual mines near Rolla, home of the Missouri School of Mines. Last year the WIPP Red Mine Rescue team competed against 41 teams from across the country to win the 2014 Metal Non-Metal National Mine Rescue Competition.

Members of the WIPP Blue Team include Gary Kessler (Captain), Jim Pearce (First aid) Nico Dominguez (Co-Captain), Ty Zimmerly (Map Man), Manny Marquez (alternate), Lance Turnbow (fresh air base), Heath Fowler (Gas Man), Mathew Ridgway and Team Trainer Richard West. The team's performance supports the Department's continued commitment to improve WIPP's underground emergency preparedness capabilities.

Next WIPP Town Hall Meeting Scheduled October 29

The City of Carlsbad and DOE will co-host its Town Hall meeting featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities. The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 29 at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. Live streaming of the meeting can be seen at <http://new.livestream.com/rvv/>.