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## **WIPP UPDATE: April 20, 2017**

### **WIPP's Mine Rescue Team Wins Competition**

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) mine rescue teams (Red and Blue) recently competed in the Southwest Regional Mine Rescue Association Competition, held in Carlsbad, NM. The WIPP Red Team came away with top honors, being named the Overall Contest Champion and taking first in the field competition, and WIPP Blue Team members (Heath Fowler and Nico Dominguez) won the team technician category.

“We have, arguably, the two best mine rescue teams in the country,” said Phil Breidenbach, Nuclear Waste Partnership President and Project Manager. “It gives me comfort to know that we have such skilled professionals ready to step in if we ever need them.”



**Members of the WIPP Red Team prepare to begin the field portion of the mine rescue competition recently held in Carlsbad, NM.**

The contest included a first aid portion, which involves finding, treating and rescuing trapped or injured individuals. The field portion consisted of exploring a simulated mine, monitoring the underground air for gases, mapping the mine to keep members informed of obstacles and routes, rescuing survivors, and reestablishing ventilation. Another part of the competition is to maintain a fresh air base that serves as a communication and command center for the team. The teams' performance supports the continued commitment by mine rescue individuals to ensure emergency preparedness capabilities at the WIPP facility.

At WIPP and most other mines, mine rescue team members are 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.

Mine rescue teams participate in several competitions each year to sharpen their skills, share lessons learned and continually raise the level of mine safety in the world. In real emergencies, the lives of mine rescue team members and their coworkers depend on the proficiency of each individual's skill and training.

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The Carlsbad Field Office recently added another communication tool to help stakeholders stay informed about what's happening at WIPP. The WIPP Facebook page provides brief highlights of information on all facets of the WIPP program, so be sure to **like us on Facebook at WIPP – Waste Isolation Pilot Plant**. You can also find us on Twitter **@WIPPNews**.