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WIPP UPDATE: July 29, 2016

WIPP Mine Rescue Team Wins Field Competition National Championship

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Blue Mine Rescue Team captured top honors in the field competition at the Metal/Non-Metal National Mine Rescue Championship, topping 36 teams from 18 states, spanning from Alaska to Georgia, who were competing this week in Reno, Nevada. Newmont Mining Corporation from Carlin, Nevada edged out WIPP for the overall national championship.

“I couldn’t be prouder of the professionals we call the WIPP Mine Rescue Team,” said Phil Breidenbach, President and Project Manager of Nuclear Waste Partnership, the management and operating contractor whose employees represented WIPP at the national competition. “After watching the competition and seeing our employees’ passion, it makes me proud to be associated with them. Every person at WIPP can rest assured that we work with the best mine rescue teams in the nation.”



The WIPP Blue Mine Rescue Team poses with their national championship trophy in the field competition. Pictured are (front row, left to right) Ty Zimmerly, Kirk Nance, Heath Fowler, Richard (Stik) West and Phil Breidenbach, NWP President and Project Manager. (Back row) Kenny Padilla, DOE Carlsbad Field Office Mine Operations Manager, Ed Kyser, Manny Marquez, Nico Dominguez, Chris Dominguez, Lance Turnbow, Gary Kessler and David Stuhan, NWP Emergency Operations and Security Manager.

The Blue team was led by Team Captain Heath Fowler. He recently took over team captain duties from Gary Kessler, who was inducted into the Metal/Non-Metal National Mine Rescue Hall of Fame two years ago. The

Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) established the Hall of Fame to honor individuals who through their accomplishments and commitment stand out as exceptional in the field of mine rescue.

The Blue Team also finished fourth in the team technician competition that assesses the ability of two technicians to ensure the multi-gas and self-contained breathing apparatuses are in proper working condition.

WIPP's Red Mine Rescue Team, which also participated in the national championship, placed sixth in the first aid competition, which requires individuals to deal with medical emergency techniques.

The National Mine Rescue Championship is held every other year. Teams are tested on knowledge of mine gases, ventilation, first-aid, miner recovery, and firefighting. 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.

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 teams in the event of an emergency.

Mine rescue competitions are designed to sharpen skills and test the knowledge of team members in 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.

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.

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.

Blue Team: Heath Fowler, Ed Keyser, Ty Zimmerly, Kirk Nance, Nico Dominguez, Lance Tunbow, Gary Kessler, Manny Marquez and Richard (Stik) West (trainer).

Red Team: Matt Ridgway, Mark Long, Fabian Carrasco, Matt Carnathan, Justin Bailey, Tony Mihelic, Aaron Ballew, Kelly Burke and Richard (Stik) West (trainer).

Correction: The July 28 WIPP Update incorrectly referred to preliminary drilling work being done to "determine the feasibility of constructing a new Permanent Ventilation System". The geotechnical

investigation drilling and core sampling is being done to collect information on geologic support capacity, seismic design parameters and foundation requirements for the new filter building. The revised update can be found [here](#)

Next WIPP Town Hall Meeting Set for August 4

The City of Carlsbad and DOE co-host Town Hall meetings to provide updates on WIPP restart activities. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 4, at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. WIPP Town Hall Meetings are live streamed at <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/>.