



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Virginia Department of Energy

Washington Building / 8th Floor
1100 Bank Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219-3638
(804) 692-3200 FAX (804) 692-3237
www.energy.virginia.gov

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Tarah Kesterson

(276) 356-3405

tarah.kesterson@energy.virginia.gov

Paramont Contura Takes Top Award in First Annual Overmountain Mine Rescue Competition

Abingdon, Va. – Paramont Contura took the top award at the first annual Overmountain Mine Rescue Competition. The event was co-hosted by National Mine Rescue Association Post 7 and the Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy). Eight teams demonstrated skills specific to responding to an emergency in an underground mine at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon.

The event was named for the Overmountain Men. They were volunteers that came from Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Soldiers mustered in Abingdon in 1780 and eventually fought and won the crucial Revolutionary War battle of Kings Mountain. In a similar spirit, this contest brought contestants from across the Appalachian region that also volunteer to serve as first responders to their fellow miners.

“The mine rescue community is one of a kind. These volunteers are willing to battle any conditions to save their fellow miners and we are grateful for their service,” **said National Mine Rescue Association Post 7 President Dave Goad**. “These teams may be competitors here but, in an emergency, they would act as one. The fellowship amongst the various company participants is just as important as the contest.”

“We are happy to have this important training here in Abingdon for the first time. The inspiring history of the Overmountain men coupled with the impressive talents of these responders is one-of-a-kind,” **said Virginia Energy Director of Coal Programs Randy Moore**. “Virginia Energy’s first priority is the safety of our mine workers, and this event is another tool to ensure they have the best responding should there be an emergency.”

Day one of the competition tested skills in First Aid and bench. The bench competition requires miners to identify issues within breathing apparatuses used by the mine rescue teams. A Team Tech skills competition was also added to the contest where miners demonstrate how to ensure air quality underground is safe.

Day two featured the team competition. The field adjacent to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center was set up to emulate underground mines. Within each field were a set of problems which the teams had to work together to solve in the least amount of time. Mine Rescue teams were asked to rescue trapped miners, make sure the air quality underground was restored, put out fires and ensure the safety of all their fellow teammates throughout the competition. The teams are required to wear the breathing apparatuses while completing the problem.

Paramont Contura, Coronado Coal, Virginia Small Operators Mine Rescue and Wellmore Coal Company were the Virginia companies represented in the mine rescue competition. From West Virginia, Southern Pocahontas's Apache team and Affinity Mne Rescue took the field. Iron Senergy's Cumberland Mine team came to compete from Pennsylvania.

Top honors went to:

Mine Rescue Winners: Paramont Contura

2nd place: Affinity Mine Rescue

3rd Place: Iron Senergy Cumberland Mine

Bench BG-4 Winner: Rob Hutchinson Jr., Iron Senergy Cumberland Mine

2nd place: Robbie Middleton, Paramont Contura

3rd Place: Gary Valusek Jr., Iron Senergy Cumberland Mine

Pre-Shift Winner: James Thomas, Alpha Metallurgical Resources Southern West Virginia

2nd place: Frankie Moore, Paramont Contura

3rd place: Joey Sykes, Paramont Contura

Team Tech Winner: Keith Burnette and Josh Sizemore with Affinity Mine Rescue

2nd place: James Thomas and Josh Vereen with Alpha Metallurgical Resources Southern West Virginia

3rd place: Justin Corso and Curtis Lewis with Iron Senergy Cumberland Mine

First Aid Winner: Adam Sipes, Dave Green and Brian Jarell with Alpha Metallurgical Resources Southern West Virginia

2nd place: Chris Hartman, Eric Lewis and Josh McCartney with Iron Senergy Cumberland Mine

3rd place: Jordan Curry, Brandon Rasnake and Johnny Branham with Wellmore Coal Company

Pictured (L to R): Front Row: Brad Hawkins, Eric Collins and Robbie Middleton

Back Row: Dave Goad, NMA Post 7 President, Joey Sykes, Frankie Moore, Adam Phillips and Randy Moore, Virginia Energy Director of Coal Programs