



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

1100 Bank Street (8th Floor), Richmond, VA 23219
Office: (804) 692-3200 | TDD: (800) 828-1120

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE— JUNE 27, 2025

Virginia Mine Rescue Teams Showcase Life-Saving Skills at Annual Competition

RICHMOND, VA — Mine emergencies are rare, but when they happen, preparation is everything. That's why ten mine rescue teams from Virginia and surrounding states gathered in Abingdon this month to compete in one of the Commonwealth's most important mine safety training events.

Hosted by the Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy)—alongside the National Mine Rescue Association (NMRA) Post 7, the Metallurgical Coal Producers Association (MCPA), and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA)—the event combined competition with hands-on training to strengthen emergency response capabilities across the industry. Teams competed in both the **38th Annual Governor's Cup** and the **3rd Annual Overmountain Mine Rescue Competition**, designed to keep miners and first responders sharp, coordinated, and ready for real-world scenarios.

The contests featured realistic underground mine simulations where teams responded to staged emergencies—rescuing trapped miners, restoring air quality, suppressing fires, and ensuring team safety while operating in full breathing apparatus. Additional skill events tested individual performance in first aid, equipment diagnostics, air monitoring, and safety inspections.

Top Awards from the 2025 Competition:

- Grand Champion: **Wellmore Coal Company**
- Governor's Cup Mine Rescue: **Wellmore Coal Company**
- Overmountain Mine Rescue: **Iron Synergy**
- Pre-shift Inspection: **Joey Sykes (Paramont Contura)**
- First Aid: **Paramont Contura B Team**
- BG-4 Bench: **Todd Ward (Metinvest Wellmore)**
- Team Tech: **George Smith & Justin Sargent (Metinvest Affinity)**

"We are grateful to not have to put these teams to use but are confident should a major emergency happen, they would be ready to respond," said **Virginia Energy Director of Coal Programs Randy Moore**. "This agency ranks worker safety as its top priority, and we are glad to join with partners to ensure there is another layer of protection should our miners find themselves in harm's way."

"This joint contest effort is truly a unique opportunity for coal company mine rescue teams by combining the contests," said **MCPA Chairman J.P. Richardson**. "As a result of this partnership, the industry's mine rescue teams can compete in two contests at the same location and individual miners can take part in special events like the skills contest, in one three-day period."

“These miners that volunteer to serve on the team deserve all our gratitude,” said **NMRA Post 7 President Gwendolyn Jessee**. “There is fierce competition on the field but comradery like none other when the contest ends. We are honored to host the opportunity for them to showcase their skills and grow their friendships.”

Competing teams included representatives from Affinity Mine Complex, Buchanan Minerals, Iron Senegy, Paramount Contura, Wellmore Coal Company, and WVU Extension. Event sponsors included Jenmar, Drager, CSE Company, United Central Industrial Supply, and Wellmore Coal Company.

[Photos from the event are available online.](#)

Media Contact:

Richard Borean

Virginia Energy

Communications Director

press@energy.virginia.gov