



Department of Highways District 9

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Contact: Allen Blair
Allen.Blair@ky.gov
606-845-2551
606-748-3716

Eight earn trophies at annual District 9 equipment ‘rodeo’ *Top winners advance to state*

FLEMINGSBURG, Ky. – Eight northeast Kentucky crew members in Department of Highways District 9 earned trophies recently in the olympics of road workers – the Equipment Rodeo.



Highway District 9 crew members who took top honors at the annual equipment “rodeo” competition in August were, from left, Nick Clark, Dwayne Laney, Bryon Mitchell, Todd Plank, Addie Thomas, Ronnie Thompson and James Hickerson. Not pictured: Eddie Rice.

An integral part of the Transportation Cabinet’s safety and training programs, the annual competition provides an opportunity for highway equipment operators to showcase and enhance their skills while preparing for the upcoming snow and ice removal season.

In a repeat of last year's performance, Todd Plank of the Rowan County maintenance crew took first place in the Truck and Snow Plow Road Course, followed by Addie Thomas of the Rowan County structures crew in second place, and Bryon Mitchell of Fleming County in third.

In truck and trailer docking, Nick Clark of Nicholas County took first place, followed by district roadside agronomy crew member Dwayne Laney from Elliott County in second and equipment garage crew member Eddie Rice of Fleming County in third.

Fleming County maintenance crew members swept the backhoe competition with James Hickerson in first place, Ronnie Thompson in second and Bryon Mitchell in third.

Tallying scores from each competition, Plank placed first overall with Hickerson in second and Thompson in third. The crew that scored the most points in the competition was the Mason County maintenance crew.

Roadeos, which are open to any Transportation Cabinet employee who has a commercial driver's license, take place in highway districts throughout Kentucky. Equipment operators compete among their peers in three skill contests:

- Truck and Plow Road Course, which tests operators' ability to negotiate a truck with an attached snow plow blade through a tight turn in a confined space and maneuvering through the lane in a manner to avoid hitting cones or obstacles.
- Truck and Trailer Alley Dock, which tests operators' ability to back a vehicle with a trailer into a narrow space and stop within six inches of a dock or free-standing barricade.
- Backhoe Competition, which tests an operator's ability to maneuver the hoe bucket in tight quarters around culverts or other drainage structures. Competitors must move golf balls around obstacles using a special hoe attachment.

"It requires expertise to properly operate snow plows, end loaders, graders and other equipment," said Bart Bryant, District 9's chief engineer. "These competitions showcase the high level of skill and professionalism that our crew members exhibit each day in keeping the state's highways maintained."

More than 50 highway equipment operators competed at District 9's roadeo held Aug. 10 at Grayson Lake State Park. Top finishers advance to the state finals scheduled for Sept. 1 in Anderson County.

Highway District 9 covers Bath, Nicholas, Mason, Fleming, Rowan, Lewis, Carter, Elliott, Greenup and Boyd counties in northeast Kentucky.

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