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**State Equipment Operators Compete in ‘Rodeo’ That Combines Safety Training
with Skills Competition**

12 qualify to advance to regional skills competition in West Virginia

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 6, 2023) – Twelve Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) equipment operators will advance to represent Kentucky at the Southeastern Regional Equipment Operator’s Safety and Training Conference after earning high marks in a two-day, state-level competition.

The annual State Equipment Operators’ Safety and Training Conference, informally called the Equipment “Rodeo,” is a highly anticipated training event where heavy equipment operators from 12 Department of Highways districts showcase their skills in friendly competition.

Participants qualified for the state Rodeo at the Kentucky Horse Park by finishing either first or second in district-level competitions that feature six obstacle course exercises. The top two finishers in each event at the state Rodeo now advance to the regional competition hosted by the West Virginia Department of Transportation at Beckley, West Virginia.

“Our crews operate heavy equipment that requires precision skills to perform critical maintenance activities, like plowing snow or hauling materials,” said KYTC Secretary Jim Gray. “This statewide event, which began in 2006, is an important safety training exercise to properly handle potentially hazardous equipment and machinery, and it’s an impressive showcase of our front-line crews’ mastery of the trade.”

The training and competition event was June 27 and 28. Operators competed in six courses testing accuracy, agility and speed while operating heavy equipment that included graders, backhoes, single- and tandem-axle dump trucks, tractors with mowers and tractor trucks with lowboy trailers. During the backhoe competition, operators pick up five golf balls, one at a time, from a 4-by-8-foot box of sand with a spoon-like attachment on the backhoe bucket and drop them in narrow cylinders with openings as small as three inches.

Besides the skills competition, participants received training about fire suppression systems, two-way communications equipment, truck braking systems and truck tire maintenance and safety.

A team from Department of Highways District 9, in Flemingsburg, was the overall Rodeo champion with 253 points. The District 10 team, from Jackson, was second with 187 points. The team from District 6, Covington, finished third with 173 points.

Individual Finishers by Course:

Tractor Truck with Lowboy Trailer

1st Place – Charlie Barnes, Highway District 7
2nd Place – Mitchell Tyra, Highway District 10
3rd Place – Josh Garmon, Highway District 4

Tandem Axle Dump Truck

1st Place – Josh Howard, Highway District 10
2nd Place – Landon Lawson, Highway District 10
3rd Place – Jacob Plank, Highway District 9

Single Axle Dump Truck

1st Place – Jonny Bell, Highway District 9
2nd Place – Josh Garmon, Highway District 4
3rd Place – Jacob Plank, Highway District 9

Tractor with Mower

1st Place – Alvin Stamper, Highway District 11
2nd Place – Dakota Hoskins, Highway District 4
3rd Place – Adam Matterly, Highway District 8

Backhoe

1st Place – Joe Sharp, Highway District 8
2nd Place – Courtney Vanover, Highway District 8
3rd Place – Chad Conway, Highway District 10

Motor Grader

1st Place – David Webster, Highway District 6

2nd Place – Kevin Workman, District 9
3rd Place – Kyle Dezarn, Highway District 6

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EDITORS NOTE: Click [here](#) for an event photo gallery.

