



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
TRANSPORTATION CABINET
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Andy Beshear
GOVERNOR

Jim Gray
SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts: Naitore Djigbenou
502-782-4829
naitore.djigbenou@ky.gov

Allen Blair
502-782-4828
allen.blair@ky.gov

**State Equipment Operators Champion Safety Training and Agility
at 'Rodeo' Skills Competition**

14 winners advance to regional competition in North Carolina

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 26, 2024) – Fourteen Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) equipment operators have advanced 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, or Equipment "Rodeo," is a much-anticipated safety training exercise where heavy equipment operators from 12 Department of Highways districts showcase their skills.

Participants qualified for the state Rodeo by finishing either first or second in district-level competitions that feature seven obstacle course exercises. The top two finishers in each event now advance to the regional competition hosted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Sept. 16-19, in Raleigh.

"The safety of our workers and our families traveling our roads is always a top priority," Gov. Andy Beshear said. "We applaud our state employees for their commitment to safety and congratulate everyone who participated."

"Our front-line crews operate heavy equipment in all weather conditions that require expert skills to perform critical maintenance activities, like plowing snow and hauling a variety of materials," said KYTC Secretary Jim Gray. "This equipment Rodeo showcases their mastery of the trade as they practice proper equipment handling, learn best practices in safety and enjoy friendly competition with their peers statewide."

The training and competition event was held June 25-26 at the Kentucky Horse Park. Operators competed in seven 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. New to the Rodeo this year was the skid steer competition where participants maneuvered the small front-end loader in tight places while adjusting the blade to miss varying height obstacles.

Next year, Kentucky will be hosting crews from several states for the Southeast Regional Rodeo. "It will be a great opportunity to showcase our new Kentucky home and the KYTC employees who make us proud," said Secretary Gray.

A team from Department of Highways District 10, in Jackson, was the overall Rodeo champion with 265 points. The District 07 team, from Lexington, was second with 243 points. The team from District 06, in Covington, finished third with 215 points.

Individual finishers by course:

Tractor Truck with Lowboy Trailer

1st Place – Josh Garmon, Highway District 04
2nd Place – Darrell Langston, Highway District 01
3rd Place – Matthew Kirby, Highway District 10

Tandem Axle Dump Truck

1st Place – Tim Davis, Highway District 07
2nd Place – Matthew Kirby, Highway District 10
3rd Place – Charles Stevens, Highway District 10

Single Axle Dump Truck

1st Place – Jamie Watkins, Highway District 04
2nd Place – Brett Robinson, Highway District 11
3rd Place – Josh Garmon, Highway District 04

Tractor with Mower

1st Place – Chuck Ward, Highway District 10
2nd Place – Adam Matherly, Highway District 08
3rd Place – Justin O'Neal, Highway District 01

Backhoe

1st Place – Joe Sharp, Highway District 08
2nd Place – Jeremiah Moyers, Highway District 09
3rd Place – Greg Dewees Jr., Highway District 11

Motor Grader

1st Place – Kyle Dezarn, Highway District 06
2nd Place – David Webster, Highway District 06
3rd Place – Dustan Drury, Highway District 07

Skid Steer

1st Place – Nicholas Howell, Highway District 03
2nd Place – Ricky Lunsford, Highway District 07
3rd Place – Paul Gripshover, Highway District 03

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Editor's note: Click [HERE](#) to view photos from the two-day event.

