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Interstate Mining Compact Commission Awards Presented at Annual Governor's Cup Mine Rescue Competition

*~ Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy Received
National Awards for Miner Safety and Training ~*

Wise, Va. – Safety training programs created by the staff of the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) received top honors from the Interstate Mining Compact Commission (IMCC). DMME received the Coal Underground Mining Safety and Health Training Award and the Metal/Nonmetal Surface Mining Safety and Health Training Award.

The agency was recognized for the achievements during the awards program at the annual Virginia Governor's Cup Mine Rescue Competition. **IMCC Executive Director Thomas Clarke** made the presentation. "The number one goal for the mining of coal and other minerals has to be keeping miners safe and healthy. A starting point for achieving this is effective training programs. Virginia continues to set the bar for outstanding training programs," said Clarke. "The Commonwealth's commitment to safety and creativity when creating new ways to ensure these workers are not only properly trained but frequently reminded of simple safety acts is to be commended."

"We are honored to be recognized as the best among the 25 states within the IMCC," **said DMME Deputy Director Butch Lambert**. "Our miners are the most important asset to the industry in Virginia and our teams are always looking for creative ways to ensure these workers are educated and refreshed often. Our team never stops training."

DMME's "Mine Safety Minute" videos received the coal underground award in the state category. The videos are short and simple reminders designed to target common safety issues. The agency

teamed with the industry for topics and demonstrations. “We saw a slight increase in our injury rate in 2017 and knew we had to act,” said **Virginia Mine Chief Randy Moore**. “Every minute counts and the numbers proved this tool was one of many that was successful in decreasing the injury rate in Virginia.” The videos are shared every week on DMME’s social media accounts and are always available on the agency’s [YouTube channel](#).

DMME also received the metal/nonmetal award for the Open Pit Miner Apprenticeship Program. Created in collaboration with the Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance and Germanna and Mountain Empire Community Colleges, the goal is to create a more knowledgeable and safer mining workforce. While attendees will receive valuable, hands-on training through the program, they will also receive credentials that can qualify them as a Virginia Certified Mine Foreman. The program also qualifies as a Journeyman apprenticeship. This program is the first of its kind in the industry.

“Working with the mining industry has been a part of our history since the college’s inception,” said **Vicki Ratliff, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions at Mountain Empire Community College**.” The addition of this option for our metal/non-metal producers enables us to serve the training needs of a growing sector of our region’s economy.”

“Partnering with Virginia’s community colleges will help us cover the entire state,” added **Director of DMME’s Mineral Mining team, Phil Skorupa**. “Having the industry and the regulatory agency on board, as well, will contribute to the success of those that complete the program.”

This is the fourth year the IMCC has given awards to recognize excellence in mine safety and health training programs and materials.

The IMCC is made up of 25 states that have a coal and metal/nonmetal mining industry.

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