



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy Recognizes Mine Rescue Day October 30th

Big Stone Gap, Va.- On this day in 1911, the first national mine rescue demonstration was held in Pennsylvania. While mine rescue teams had been around for longer, it officially recognized those that risked their lives to save others working in underground mines. It also led to National Mine Rescue Day, an annual recognition created by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to honor those who continue the efforts this day.

The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) joins MSHA in celebrating the sixth annual Mine Rescue Day. Throughout history, many in the mining community have been called upon to rescue miners from an array of emergencies in coal and metal-nonmetal mines. Those that make up the teams are often volunteers. While changes in safety laws and regulations over the years have prevented mine emergencies in which these teams would be needed, they are still prepared for such a call.

“We certainly hope we never need the services of these teams anywhere in Virginia,” said Virginia Mine Chief Randy Moore. “However, from experience, it brings great peace to those who work underground every day to know experienced people have your back and will risk their own lives to save yours. I commend those that volunteer to be on the mine rescue team.”

Currently, there are seven mine rescue teams in Virginia. Six are company teams and DMME houses the state’s team—Virginia Mine Rescue. The DMME team provides service to every underground mine in the Commonwealth. Created in 2016, the team is equipped with state of the art communication and mobile equipment that will be available to all those that respond to any emergency in the state of Virginia.

The team includes: Chris Whitt, Trainer; Ken Johnson, Assistant Trainer; Anthony Sturgill, Captain; Andy Sawyers, Tail Captain; Danny Mullins, Gas Man; Sidney Crabtree, Map Man;

Joey Musick, Stretcher Man; Vernon Johnson, Jr., Briefing Officer and Rusty Ward, Command Center. All are within DMME's mine safety group. Hunter Atkins, Willie Cochran and Dennis Honaker serve as alternates.

Mine rescue teams complete a minimum of 48 hours of training each year. They visit every mine they may respond to and participate in mine rescue competitions.