

AMAX Rescue Team To Nationals

By DANA BOWLEY
NewsWire Editor

A six-man team from AMAX Chemical Corp. will represent Carlsbad at the 4th National Metal and Nonmetal Mine Rescue contest Aug. 18 in Las Vegas, Nev.

The AMAX team is one of two from New Mexico currently registered for the national event which is expected to draw about 30 teams from around the nation. The other state team is from Gulf Mineral Resources' Mount Taylor mine near Grants.

The national contest, under the sponsorship of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), is held every two years and is conducted to give mine rescue teams experience in handling a simulated emergency situation while bringing an increased awareness to the need for well-prepared mine rescue operations.

During the off years MSHA conducts a national contest for coal mines and regional competitions for mines in the metal and non-metal category.

In the competition, which will be held at the Las Vegas Convention Center, teams are first placed in isolation and are given a lengthy, complicated written test. The teams are isolated so they will have no prior knowledge of the specific rescue problem they will have to solve.

Set up in the convention center will be a layout designed to simulate an actual mine. MSHA officials will design into that mine some sort of emergency situation — the problem. Teams do not know what the problem is until just before they are to enter the mine for the competition.

The teams are judged on how well they resolve the problem. Judging is based on the fewest number of errors the teams commit during the procedure.

Time is factored in but is not a crucial factor in scoring.

"The national contest is conducted just like the local one we had here recently," said Les Hartley, AMAX safety director and coordinator of the Carlsbad team. The fledgling New Mexico Mine Safety Association conducted a mine rescue contest in Carlsbad in early June which drew 10 New Mexico teams and one from Arizona.

Hartley said the team going to the national competition is the same one which won the ex-

perienced team division trophy in the Carlsbad contest.

Hartley said an AMAX team has competed in each of the past three nationals and "generally we have been in the top 10 teams." He noted that at the national level it is not unusual that only two or three points separate those in the top 10 and often several teams will wind up tied for third or fourth place.

"AMAX has one of the finest mine rescue teams in the nation," said Hartley. "We've got a good bunch of guys."

The safety director said the team

would like to bring back a trophy this year and he feels they're capable of it, but he noted the competition would be very stiff. "I know of at least three teams in it this year that have won it in the past" he said.

Hartley said one of the reasons the team has been successful is that AMAX has been very supportive.

"It is very expensive to outfit a team and send it to contests," he said, "but the company has really supported us."

Hartley said, "It takes more

training for contest work than is required under the law for a rescue team." He said the company supports the extra training and the contests. He said AMAX even pays the wages of team members while they're at the contests, something some firms don't do.

With the company support, he said it makes it possible for him to field a top quality team. He noted that in a real mine disaster anywhere in the region, other teams might be called in to assist and "I'd like to have a team I could send anywhere."

"We have at least one team ready to go right now and they're experts."

Asked if the contest being held in Las Vegas would distract the team, Hartley said, "Not at all." He said the team is very serious about its work.

"You bet they are," he said.

He said the team would arrive in Las Vegas the day before the contest but they wouldn't be found at the gambling tables or the shows that night.

"They spend the night before in their rooms studying for the written test," he said.

Members of the team making the trip are Ed Gasseling, captain; Eldon "Butch" Reed, co-captain; Vic Ramponi, gas man; and Walter Tarvin and Greg Zednick, stretcher bearers and map men. Jimmy Scott is the substitute.

In addition, Bobby Durham will enter the benchman's competition, a separate contest which requires the participant to locate and repair an unknown problem in the portable breathing apparatus used by the teams.

Team Trainer Kerry Frederick will also be making the trip. Hartley said he, too, would make the trip. "I'm the bag man," he said. "I get to carry everybody's bags."



Staff photo by James Granger

Team suits up in file photo from Carlsbad contest

Rio defends championship . . .

The Rio Algom "Blue" mine rescue team will defend its national championship on August 18 in Las Vegas, Nev. The fourth annual National Metal and Nonmetal Mine Rescue contest is being sponsored there by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA).

According to MSHA the past few years have witnessed an increasing awareness of the need for well prepared mine rescue operations throughout the metal and nonmetal mining industry. The contests help provide useful training and experience in preventing deaths and serious injuries in the country's mines, an MSHA release stated.

Ford B. Ford, MSHA assistant secretary, said, "This contest also represents the spirit of cooperation between the state mine inspection agencies, labor organizations, mine management, the federal government and other mining organizations. These people are dedicated towards continued improvements in responding more efficiently to mine fires and emergencies. The teams are not only well trained, but enthusiastic about displaying their safety and health skills."

The teams are judged on their ability to respond to practical mine rescue problems in a simulated mine environment that represents an actual mine fire or other type of mine emergency. Under the contest rules, any organization, club, union or local benefit society may enter a team if their employees are members of the metal or nonmetal mining community. Rio Algom has two rescue teams, dubbed the Blue and Gold teams. In competition in Las Vegas last year, the Rio Blue team was judged the best in the nation.

Mine rescue contest set

The Mine Safety and Health Administration will sponsor its fourth National Metal and Nonmetal Mine Rescue Contest on Aug. 18 in Las Vegas.

MSHA Assistant Secretary Ford B. Ford said the past few years have witnessed an increased awareness of the need for well prepared mine rescue operations throughout the metal and nonmetal mining industry. He said the contest helps provide a useful vehicle in preventing deaths and serious injuries in the nation's mines.

Approximately 30 teams will participate in the contest which is held in even-numbered years, alternating with the national competition for coal mine rescue teams.

The teams are judged on their ability to respond to practical mine rescue problems in a simulated mine environment that represents an actual mine fire or other type of mine emergency.

For additional information on contest rules, guidelines and procedures, contact MSHA's metal and nonmetal safety division at 703-235-8647, or any MSHA metal and nonmetal mine safety and health district office.