

# 20th Hazmat Challenge tests skills of hazardous materials response teams

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***Editor's Note: News media representatives interested in attending the Hazmat Challenge can contact the Laboratory's Communications Office at (505) 667-7000 to coordinate travel to the site.***

LOS ALAMOS, N.M., July 21, 2016—Ten hazardous materials response teams from New Mexico, Missouri, Oklahoma and Nebraska test their skills in a series of graded, timed exercises at the 20th annual Hazmat Challenge July 25-29 at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

“The Hazmat Challenge provides hazardous materials responders the opportunity to test their skills, share best practices with other response agencies and learn new techniques through realistic hazardous materials release scenarios in a safe, non-hazardous environment,” said Chris Rittner of the Laboratory's Security and Emergency Operations Division. Los Alamos' participation and support of the Hazmat Challenge also aligns with its goal of fostering excellence in science and engineering disciplines essential for national security missions.

Held at Los Alamos' Technical Area 49, the event requires participants to respond to simulated hazardous materials emergencies involving aircraft, rail and highway transportation, industrial piping, a simulated radiological release and a confined space event. The finale of the Hazmat Challenge is a skills-based obstacle course; teams are graded and earn points based on their ability to perform response skills through a 10-station obstacle course while using fully encapsulating personal protective equipment.

The Laboratory began the Hazmat Challenge in 1996 to hone the skills of its own hazmat team members. The event now offers a comprehensive training opportunity in a competitive format that is open to all hazardous materials response teams in New Mexico and across the nation. The winning team receives a “traveling trophy” and top-scoring teams in the technical categories are awarded permanent trophies. Separate trophies will be awarded to the three top scoring teams in the obstacle course event. Funding for New Mexico teams is provided through federal grants via the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NMDHSEM).

A video about the 2008 and 2012 Hazmat challenges is on the Laboratory's [YouTube channel](#).

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