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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



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Fort Leonard Wood competition clears the way to crown best Sapper team

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Applications for engineers wanting to compete for the title of Best Sapper are now being accepted.

The 9th annual, three-day competition is set to take place on Fort Leonard Wood, the home of the U.S. Army Engineer Regiment, from April 21 to 23.

The competition is open to Soldiers and Marines serving in the engineer career field.

The Best Sapper Competition began in 2005 as a means for engineers to demonstrate their skills.

Lt. Col. Scott Preston, 169th Engineer Battalion commander, was a company commander on Fort Leonard Wood when the competition began.

"The Sapper Leader Course fell underneath our command at that time," Preston said. "The spirit of the competition is to find the best engineer team out there."

Sappers will travel more than 50 miles in 50 hours while competing in a variety of events, testing them to their mental and physical breaking point. The events include challenges such as a demo exam, a ruck march and land navigation.

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Capt. Vernon White, Sapper Leader Course chief of training, said he contacted former Best Sapper organizers and winners for advice while planning this year's competition. However, he said this year's event will be different.

"We have new cadre and new ideas to make this year's competition intense," White said. "The competition will mirror what we as engineers do on a day-to-day basis downrange."

The competition will test the competitors to their limits -- both mentally and physically, according to Preston.

"Sleep will be minimal. They will be moving almost the whole time, and they have to carry their own gear. It will be physically demanding. Then when they get to the event stations, they will have to perform to standard, which can be challenging when you are tired," Preston said.

Teams must consist of two participants, E-4 or above, and at least one person who is a graduate of the Sapper Leader Course.

"If there are teams out there that think they qualify, but they have never been to the school, they can submit an application to the regimental command sergeant major for review. He will decide if they are worthy of competing or not," Preston said.

Competitors must furnish a letter of preparedness signed by the first lieutenant colonel in their chain of command and will report to Fort Leonard Wood on April 19.

Preston said an overview of the competition allows the competitors to see the event breakdown for the three days.

"That (overview) will remain intact. But, the tasks within the events will be altered," Preston said.

For more information or to register, visit www.wood.army.mil/sapper/BSC/index.htm.

"We have given out a list of potential tasks, so they can practice now. When they are competing and worn out, executing the tasks should come natural," Preston said.

"We want as many teams as we can get -- the more competition the better," he added.

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

Encl. (1) Photo

Photo outline: A Best Sapper competitor completes an Australian rappel as part of the 2012 event. Registration is now open for Best Sapper 2015, which is scheduled to take place April 21 to 23 on Fort Leonard Wood.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains more than 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
