Eighth Graders Learn About Fluid Power at NFPA Fluid Power Challenge

The 2009 series of National Fluid Power Association (NFPA) Fluid Power Challenges has been successfully completed. The program was expanded this year to 47 teams, nearly 200 students from 26 middle schools, who competed in four locations—Marquette University and Milwaukee School of Engineering in Milwaukee, Wis.; Harper College in Palatine, Ill.; and the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minn.

At workshops in early November, the students were given the assignment of designing and constructing a fluid power mechanism to perform a defined task. The mechanisms were required to use fluid power (hydraulics and pneumatics) to pick up weighted objects and then place them on a platform for various point totals.

After working for five weeks, the teams came together again to compete against each other in a two-minute competition. Engineers from area companies served as judges, who graded the teams and presented awards in five categories—Overall Champion, Design Champion, Teamwork Champion, Portfolio Champion, and Team Challenge Champion.

“We learned that it is fun to design and build things and to work as a team,” said one student after the competition.

The program is designed to introduce students, and their teachers, to the world of engineering and careers in fluid power. Through the Challenges, NFPA hopes to encourage students to select more mathematics and science courses in their high school curricula to keep their options open for various point totals.

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NFPA thanks the following organizations for their sponsorship of the 2009 Fluid Power Challenge: Air Logic

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