NCTA TMC
Top Tech Challenge

This year marked the second annual NC Top Tech Challenge, presented by the NCTA Technology & Maintenance Council. On April 22, 25 technicians actively working in the field all across North Carolina, and eight students from several of the top-notch diesel programs offered by community colleges met at the Benton Convention Center in downtown Winston Salem to compete for a chance to represent North Carolina at the national American Trucking Associations TMCSuperTech competition.

Stacy Earnhardt, NCTA TMC vice chairman, said, "This year we experienced a 13 percent increase in contestants and added more equipment as well as two new stations. We look forward to continuing to grow this contest and representing the state at a national level." The national competition will be held Sep 21-24 at the Walt Disney Swan & Dolphin Resort in Orlando, FL.

In addition to the honor of representing North Carolina at the TMCSuperTech competition, the contestants were also competing for cash and prizes. Up for grabs were shirts, jackets and merchandise from various sponsors, a Yeti cooler, two Jpro heavy duty software subscriptions with Norereg adapter kits and more than $1,200 in gift cards.

Earnhardt was proud to announce: "This year we will also be able to send the winning student to the national ATA TMCFutureTech competition in Orlando, FL."

The Contest
After a round of doughnuts and coffee and a little orientation, the competitors started working through a group of nine hands-on skills stations and an Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) written exam. The industry techs and student competitors were mixed together in groups of three and worked through all the stations in a timed rotation. According to Benjamin Phillips, NCTA Allied Committee chairman, "The stations covered topics that technicians
could see in a variety of shops across the state, including engine diagnostics, PDI, 5th wheel, brakes and tires. The stations are set up to test not just a technician’s ability to resolve an issue or make a repair, but his/her ability to follow the proper steps and diagnostic procedures to get to that point. It is actually possible to score more points by following the recommended practices and not actually complete the station than just make the repair without following any of the proper steps.”

**Behind the Scenes**

A special thank you goes to all of the sponsors and volunteers that helped bring the Top Tech Challenge together and make it a success. A lot of time and commitment goes into putting this type of event together, and it wouldn’t be possible without help. This year’s gold sponsors were Hale Trailer Brake & Wheel, Yarbrough Transfer, Best Cartage, MHC Kenworth, Old Dominion Freight Lines and Cummins Atlantic. The Silver Sponsors were UPS, Icon Graphics, Fontaine 5th Wheel, Epes Transport and Carrier Transicold Mid-Atlantic. Station sponsors were Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems, Consolidated Metco, Eaton, Hendrickson, Jost, MHC Kenworth, Michelin North America, Triad Freightliner and Truck Lite Co. With the cooperation and support of the sponsors, said Earnhardt and Phillips, the Top Tech Challenge event will grow year after year.

**What’s Next?**

Benjamin Phillips explained: “The hope and overall goal is to have our competitors develop a new look at the way they view and perform in their own shops. Reinforcing the importance of following recommended practices and procedures will help create an environment that will ultimately yield safer trucks on the road. I think these techs will also carry with them a sense of accomplishment and pride in their work that will spread to others in their shops. I think an event like the Top Tech Challenge doesn’t just offer them an opportunity to compete, it also celebrates their contributions to our industry.”

Details for next year’s event are still in the works and will be posted on www.nctrucking.com when they are finalized. Please look for information on our 2016 contest and make sure to get your “top techs” registered for competition. Thanks again to all who helped make the 2015 Top Tech Challenge a huge success. We look forward to next year!