

Will You Take Home the Prize?

Eric Casey

Who's the best Backhoe operator you know? Do you think you are the best? Well, there's a way you can prove your chops with a Backhoe – compete in the National Backhoe Roe-D-Hoe™ at the 2012 Pumper Show, February 27 – March 1, 2012 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis, IN. This skills competition takes place in the exhibit hall at the [Pumper Show](#) where a new national champion will be crowned again this year.

To participate in the Roe-D-Hoe™, locate the Roe-D-Hoe™ on the Pumper Show's Expo floor plan and plan to visit on either Tuesday, Feb 28, or Wednesday, Feb 29. Here's what you need to be eligible: Be at least 13 years of age, be willing to sign a release form, pay a \$5 entry fee.

The venue may be new, but the skills you need to become the next Casey Mallon remain the same: Calmness under pressure, accuracy, a “feel” for the controls, and the ability to put it all together when it's on the line. Those are the skills Mallon demonstrated by following up his Roe-D-Hoe™ victory earlier in the year at the Iowa Onsite WasteWater Association with the national championship at the 2011 NOWRA Roe-D-Hoe™ competition.

Mallon beat out more than 200 competitors who participated in the 2011 Pumper Show in Louisville, Kentucky for the crown – the largest group of competitors in the history of the Roe-D-Hoe™. Roughly 100 people tested their skills each of the first two days of last year's Pumper Show. Competition was spirited, as each participant tried to complete the course fast enough to qualify for the finals on Saturday. It sure wasn't easy, as the course was set up by “Mr. Backhoe Roe-D-Hoe,” Mick Heibert of IHI Compact Excavator Sales LLC.

Various competitors came up with high-risk strategies to complete the three events – basketball, bowling and golf. For example, in the basketball event, the goal was to pick up three basketballs with the Backhoe bucket and drop the balls through a basketball net. The safe route was to go after the balls one-at-a-time. Several competitors tried to pick up two or three balls at once and drop them in through the hoop. Those who succeeded at this strategy (not many), shaved precious seconds off their overall time and increased their chances of making it to the finals. Those who failed lost any chance of getting a good score because dropping even one ball meant a “do-over” that ate up valuable time.

By Saturday morning of the Pumper Show, the pretenders were gone, the bleachers were filled with spectators cheering on their favorite, and the contenders were ready to compete for the grand prize. Champions from NOWRA-affiliated state organizations that held sanctioned Roe-D-Hoe™ events at the state level were automatically grandfathered into the finals of the national event, meaning that there were a total of 11 finalist competing for the \$1,000 grand prize and the chance to wear the coveted Roe-D-Hoe™ Championship Belt. The tension was thick as the score to beat went lower and lower as the competition wore on. In the end, Casey Mallon came up with the best time, followed by Josh Reading of Illinois, and Timothy Boswell of Virginia.

In addition to the invaluable support provided by IHI, which supplied the electric backhoes, the Roe-D-Hoe™ was also supported by several of NOWRA's Business Benefit Program partners – Jet, Inc., Bio-Microbics, Inc., Infiltrator Systems, Norweco, and Presby Environmental. Thanks also to the volunteers who spent considerable time helping to run the Roe-D-Hoe™: Tom Fritts (who organized the overall event), Jessi Wood and Jason Vaughn from Residential Sewage Treatment Company, Allison Blodig of Bio-Microbics, Inc., Greg Graves of Norweco, and Dr. Randy Miles of the University of Missouri. Also, Jennifer Cisneros of Bio-Microbics put together the electronic leaderboard and related graphics that were both entertaining and informative. Finally, the support and space provided by COLE Publishing so that the Roe-D-Hoe™ could be held at the Pumper Show was invaluable and greatly appreciated.

The 2012 competition promises to be an even bigger event than 2011. Competition will likely be tougher with more competitors and more state champions. Want to get an even better sense of what's involved in the Roe-D-Hoe™ ? Visit NOWRA's YouTube page for scenes from the Roe-D-Hoe™ , including the finals. <http://www.youtube.com/user/NOWRAVIDEO>

Join NOWRA in Indianapolis for the 2012 National Backhoe Roe-D-Hoe™ -- and good luck!

Eric Casey is the executive director of the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association, the only national organization which represents all segments of the onsite wastewater industry. For more information or to join, visit www.nowra.org or call 800-966-2942.