

**TechNotes Issue # 420
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The following issue of TechNotes has been written by Roland Asp, C.E.T., Manager of Installation Standards for the NFSA.

Top Tech Competition - 2019

We have a Winner! The 2019 Top Tech competition was held in conjunction with the 2019 North American Fire Sprinkler Expo in Nashville and was, by all accounts, a rousing success.

As written in Mark Hopkin's article "Top Tech 2019: Who, Where and When" in the May/June 2019 issue of National Fire Sprinkler Magazine, nearly 150 contestants enrolled in the competition and over 100 completed the preliminary examination for the Top Tech Competition. The top fifty competitors (listed in the above referenced article) were invited to Nashville to continue the competition.

An onsite written qualification exam was held on Wednesday May 15th with the purpose of narrowing the field to 18 contestants who participated in the live rounds of a game show style competition in the expo hall. This onsite qualification exam consisted of ten multiple choice questions and two layout exercises.

The exam was intentionally difficult and was aimed to challenge the participants knowledge of the 2016 edition of NFPA installation standards and to test their skills as a layout technician. The top 18 from this exam were as follows:

Seed	Name	Company
1	Steve Frederick	Rioux Fire Protection Ltd.
2	Derek Gust	Patriot Fire Protection, Inc.
3	Jason Lambert	JCI / Grinnell Fire Protection Solutions
4	Brent Garvey	Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.
5	Dan Wilder	Western States Fire Protection Co.
6	Kyle Fisher	Ryan Fire Protection, Inc.
7	Jeff Howell	Western States Fire Protection Co.

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8	Matt Johnsen	United States Alliance Fire Protection
9	James Raudonis	Ryan Fire Protection, Inc.
10	Ed Snider	Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.
11	Mickey Ferguson	Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.
12	Ryan Steiner	BDR Services Ltd.
13	Fred Blanchard	BCE Engineers, Inc.
14	Paul Panattoni III	API GROUP, INC.
15	Luther Pringle	American Fire Protection Group, Inc.
16	Dustin Williams	re Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.
17	Vincent Como	Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.
18	Christopher Davis	Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.

These 18 contestants moved on to the live round of the competition. On Thursday, May 16th, six preliminary rounds were held on the expo floor each with three contestants competing. The live rounds consisted of a "Jeopardy" type game show format and generated a lot of excitement. Coworkers, families, and attendees gathered round the Top Tech stage to support the contestants.

The winners of each of the six preliminary rounds moved on to the two semifinal rounds which were held on Friday, May 17th. Like the preliminary rounds, the two semifinal rounds each had three contestants competing. The semifinalists were:

Name	Company
Steve Frederick	Rioux Fire Protection Ltd.
Brent Garvey	Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.
Kyle Fisher	Ryan Fire Protection, Inc.
Vincent Como	Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.
Jason Lambert	JCI / Grinnell Fire Protection Solutions
Dan Wilder	Western States Fire Protection Co.

The six semi-finalists battled it out and, in the end, there were two finalists left:

Name	Company
Steve Frederick	Rioux Fire Protection Ltd.
Dan Wilder	Western States Fire Protection Co.



The Final Round was held at 3pm on May 17th. Steve and Dan competed, and, in the end, Steve Frederick was crowned NFSA's Top Tech of 2019. It should be noted that this is the second time that Steve was the Top Tech. He was also the winner of the 2015 competition.

2019 Top Tech

Name	Company
Steve Frederick	Rioux Fire Protection Ltd.

As a layout technician myself, I have a lot of respect for all the contestants. This was not an easy competition, and every one of the participants truly are some of the best of the best in the industry. There really were no losers in this competition, and all have proved that they are an asset to our industry. As I repeatedly told all the contestants, this competition is intended to be fun and to highlight the skills of the layout technician. Regardless, the good-natured competitive spirit of all involved was gratifying to see.

The fifty technicians who were invited to Nashville deserve Kudos for their achievement. The 18 contestants who made it to the live rounds truly were impressive and the six semifinalists were amazing. The knowledge shown by the two finalists was humbling and Steve Frederick's mastery of the skills of the layout technicians was truly awe-inspiring.

Congratulations to All!

Finally, I believe that the contestant's companies also deserve praise for supporting their employees in this competition and for providing a work environment that allows their employees to nurture their skills in the industry and rise to the level of the top layout technicians in the industry. Thank you!

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