
NEWS RELEASE

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SME Digs into New Orleans with RETC2015

Post-Hurricane Katrina projects highlighted

Tunnelers and underground construction contractors, suppliers, designers and owners from around the world came together at the 2015 Rapid Excavation Tunneling Conference (RETC) in New Orleans, LA, June 7-10.

The biennial event drew 1,255 attendees who visited 157 exhibitors. Attendees and exhibitors networked at a variety of events, attended any of 113 peer-to-peer technical presentations, and in many cases participated in various committee and governance meetings as volunteer leaders in those groups.

“We were very pleased with both the number of exhibits and the attendance, given that the event was just two weeks after the World Tunnel Congress in Dubrovnik, Croatia,” said SME Executive Director David L. Kanagy. “We received extremely positive feedback from those who attended both events. The lessons learned from the back-to-back events will help us when we present World Tunnel Congress in April 2016, in San Francisco.”

As managers of RETC and North American Tunneling (NAT) Conference (held in off years from RETC), SME had a good sense of the needs of the tunneling community for this event. Because the conference had grown considerably since securing the venue for this event, the exhibits and technical sessions were spread over multiple floors. Mike Rispin of Normet stated, “I was a little worried about the two floors, but the traffic at our booth was excellent and we had quality conversations with many good people.”

Beyond the business of the conference, a number of students were awarded scholarships, and keynote speaker Louisiana native General Russel L. Honoré (Ret.) spoke on his experiences in overseeing the rescue and recovery of New Orleans after the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

In 2016 the UCA of SME, a division of SME, will be managing the World Tunnel Congress (WTC) in San Francisco, CA, April 22-28. That event will bring together the attendees from RETC and NAT, as well as international tunnelers from Europe, Asia and South America. 2,500 attendees are expected with more than 300 exhibit booths. WTC will be a one-time enhancement to the regularly scheduled NAT Conference, with the NAT conference returning in 2018 in Washington, D.C.

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SME is a professional society (nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation) whose more than 15,000 members represent all professions serving the minerals industry in more than 100 countries. SME members include engineers, geologists, metallurgists, educators, students and researchers. SME advances the worldwide minerals community through information exchange and professional development.

For more information, contact John Hayden, Deputy Executive Director - Public Affairs and Government Relations,
303-948-4250 or hayden@smenet.org

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