

WEA of Texas Operation Challenge Teams Bring Home 8 Trophies from WEFTEC!  
By Jeff Sober, WEAT Operations Challenge Chair

The four Texas teams that traveled to New Orleans to compete in the 23rd Annual Operations Challenge all brought back some display case hardware. This year, WEAT sent the Austin Dillo Xpress, the Dallas Aqua Techs, the San Antonio Power SAWS, and the Trinity River Authority CReWSers to WEFTEC to represent Texas in the 37 team field. Texas was able to send four teams to compete because of our 2009 National Champions, the TRA CReWSers, received an automatic entry. Enthusiasm was high as this event serves as the culmination of months of practice for the teams.

The large field is broken up into two divisions, with the Austin Dillo Xpress as our lone representative in Division II. But during the Awards Ceremony, alone they were not as all the Texas teams ran toward the stage and gathered around to congratulate Austin on what most will agree was Texas's biggest success of the competition: The Dillo Xpress cleaned house in the Safety Event with an exciting first place finish that was 21.32 seconds faster than the next closest team. This strong finish paced Austin towards a second place overall finish in Division II, pushing Austin into the elite ten-team Division I category. Austin will join the other three Texas Division I teams, making Texas the only multiple-team member association all in Division I.

In Division I, the TRA CReWSers brought home three trophies with strong second place finishes in the Laboratory, Process, and Maintenance Events. The Dallas Aqua Techs brought back two trophies with hard-fought third place finishes in the Safety and Collection Systems Events, while the San Antonio Power SAWS wrangled in a solid third place in the Laboratory Event. If anyone was counting, the Texas Division I teams placed in every event and brought back 33% of the trophies overall, which kept emotions high during the two hour evening award ceremony. TRA, SAWS, and Dallas placed 5th, 6th, and 7th Overall, respectively. The first place overall trophy went to Terminal Velocity from Virginia.

With four Division I teams, Texas looks to be the strongest Operations Challenge State around. These fiercely competitive teams will square off next when they converge on Fort Worth for Texas Water 2011 in April. The four Division I teams will be competing to claim one of three available spots for next years national competition.

Representing the Teams:

Austin Dillo Xpress:

Ash Bledsoe  
Daniel Smith  
Ellery Studivant  
John Benham  
Nathan Haywood  
Richard Hamilton

Dallas Aqua Techs:

Eric Rivera  
James Ray  
Kevin Willey  
Rey Davila  
Thai Nguyen

San Antonio Power SAWS:

Carl Ray Krueger  
Frederic J Winter  
Gilberto O Aguilar  
Pedro T. Rios III  
Roland Gutierrez  
Sharon J Surra

TRA CReWSers:

Dale Burrow  
David Brown  
Jacob Burwell  
Patrick Lynn  
Steve Price

About Operations Challenge: Teams of five compete in five events: including Safety, Maintenance, Collection Systems, Laboratory, and Process Control. Winners are determined by a weighted point system usually based on time. The events are designed to challenge the many skills required by Wastewater Professionals when operating and maintaining wastewater treatment facilities.

We appreciate our sponsors who make all of this possible. For sponsorship opportunities for Texas Operations Challenge, please contact: Jeff Sober at [jsober@carollo.com](mailto:jsober@carollo.com) or Orren West at [orren.west@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:orren.west@ci.austin.tx.us).