

# Forklift Rodeo crowns champions

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Left to right, Christofer Kurilov, Marty Erwin, Bradley Smith, Francis (Mike) Miller, Brian Patenaude, Mark Fernandes, Anthony Neglia and Shane Waldron.

Orange was the color of choice at the New England Distribution Center in Whitinsville, MA as contestants vied for top billing at National Grid's 4<sup>th</sup> annual Regional Forklift Rodeo.

Eight contestants – the winners of regional contests across National Grid's service areas in New England and New York, navigated cones Oct. 19 in a friendly competition promoting workplace safety and proper forklift operation.

Safety and accuracy were the focus of the all-day effort, which included four skill events on forklifts. With music flooding the warehouse, co-workers cheered on the contestants who donned orange Forklift Rodeo T-shirts for the non-timed events.

"It was a fun showcase of everyone's talents," said Mark Fernandes of Worcester, who took home the trophy as the first-place winner. Fernandes represented the Sutton MA warehouse, as did the second and third-place finalists: Shane Waldron of Cumberland, R.I. and Brian Patenaude of West Brookfield, MA.

Left to right, Shane Waldron, Mark Fernandes, and Brian Patenaude.

For Waldron and Patenaude, it was their second consecutive year finishing in the top tier. Patenaude placed second in 2016 with Waldron coming in third.

There are approximately 35,000 forklift accidents annually according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Operator error, unfamiliarity with forklift operations and misuse of equipment the top reasons for the accidents.

The five other contestants were Christofer Kurilov of Brooklyn, NY, representing the Greenpoint, NY warehouse, Anthony Neglia of Island Park, NY for the Long Island warehouse, Marty Erwin of Camillus, NY for the Henry Clay Blvd. warehouse in Liverpool, NY, Bradley Smith of Hannibal, NY for the Kensington Ave. warehouse in Buffalo, NY, and Francis (Mike) Miller of Mechanicville, NY for the Clifton Park, NY warehouse.

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