

FRC Mentor Orientation 102: Choosing a Competition
Tips and Suggestions for Successful Planning and Travel
Kathie Kentfield – FIRST Senior Mentor, Connecticut
Richard Levey – FIRST Senior Mentor, Illinois
And special guest, Frank Merrick – FRC Deputy Director, *FIRST*
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If you have any questions following the call, please e-mail our FSM hotline:
firstseniormentors@usfirst.org

Please note that all information included below was accurate as of September 21, 2009. Teams should follow the information posted on the *FIRST* website for up-to-date, official information.

1. FRC Regional Events – Two-day events, District Events and other related topics - Frank Merrick
2. Now that you have a team established, where can you compete?
 - Schedule of Events posted here:
<http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc/regionalevents.aspx?id=430>
 - 2010 Championship eligibility criteria:
<http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc/content.aspx?id=944>
2. Deciding where to go:
 - a. Costs
 - Registration Fees (see <http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc/content.aspx?id=460> for details), Michigan teams, please read the *FIRST* web page. All other teams - Initial Regional - \$5000 for veteran teams who participated in 2009, \$6500 for returning veteran teams who did not participate in 2009 and rookie teams, minus a \$1,000 Kamen grant, all monies due at *FIRST* by December 4. Additional Regionals - \$4000 per event, due at *FIRST* by January 15, 2010. Championship Event - \$5000 due at *FIRST* by January 15, 2010.
 - Travel: is the event local/within walking or driving distance? Does it require transportation – Can you share travel arrangements with other teams? **BOOK EARLY!**
 - Overnight stay: Weather concerns. School board approval. Hotel choices.
 - Meals: Food allergies, preferences. Choosing a restaurant.
 - Who pays for what? Sponsors, fundraising, team member/family contributions. Who pays for engineers? Who pays for team leader, other mentors, chaperones?
 - b. Time Conflicts
 - Some events fall during school vacation
 - Mandatory state testing/SATS/ACTs
 - Other big extracurricular trips/events
 - Religious holidays that might pose restrictions on travel, meals, etc

c. Location

- What other things are there to do? Have team members research - attractions, events, shopping, food, etc.
- Team Social: not all regionals have one
- Safety concerns
- Climate: possibility of inclement weather, dress necessities
- State IDs/Passports (some events may require this, especially for travel)

d. Getting approval from school administration

- Reasonable location and timeframe
- Travel restrictions
- Being able to “sell” the trip to your school administration: can you pair it with other educational outings?
- Be sure to know of the general approval timeframe – start early!
- Chaperones!

e. Regional Size

- Big events: diversity, more veteran teams to learn from, greater competition
- Small events: intimate environment, more chance for success, great potential for formation of strong partnerships
- “Flavor” of event – some Regionals are more competitive, some are more “fun”; some venues are better suited for watching for three days than others.

f. Attending Multiple Regionals

- Back-to-back Regionals: bad idea!
- One home and one travel event
- Time away from school/work for students/mentors
- Work with new/more teams
- Meet more teams
- Initial event may serve as practice, time to work out kinks
- Ability for greater team bonding, inter-team networking
- Can you afford it?
- Shipping concerns
- Planning ahead for possible Championship qualification

3. Who Decides - Options

- a. Simple choice - the closest, least expensive event
- b. Team members - research, discussion, and vote of any/all options
- c. Mentor’s decision
- d. Parent involvement in choice and planning - hold parent meetings
- e. School administration approval - what restrictions are posed?

4. Where and When to Register

- a. Register for events using TIMS: <https://my.usfirst.org/frc/tims/>, be sure to complete the Team Profile section – you must validate it by clicking on the button to be sure there are no red marks before you can proceed to the team registration section.
- b. Season Timeline: <http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc/content.aspx?id=454> ,
 - Initial Regional Event Registration: starts at **noon** on **Oct 1** (Payment due at *FIRST* on Dec 4)

- Second Regional Event Registration: starts at noon on Oct 22 (Payment at due at *FIRST* on Jan 15)
 - Championship Registration:
 - Pre-qualified and veteran teams who did not compete at the 2009 Championship: starts at noon on Oct 1 (Payment due at *FIRST* on JANUARY 15)
 - Veteran teams who did compete at the 2009 Championship: starts noon on Oct 23 (Payment due at *FIRST* on JAN 15)
- NOTE: FRC rookie teams are not eligible to attend the *FIRST* Championship via open Registration but must qualify to attend and register after qualifying

5. Additional Resources:

- a. *FIRST* website: www.usfirst.org
- b. *FIRST* E-mail Blast Archive:
<http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc/content.aspx?id=6616>
- c. Official Forums: <http://forums.usfirst.org/>
- d. Additional resources including link to new Mentor resources library:
<http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc/content.aspx?id=478>
- e. FRC Program Director Bill Miller's blog: <http://frcdirector.blogspot.com>
- f. NEMO: Questions to Consider When Choosing your *FIRST* Event(s):
http://www.firstnemo.org/PDF/Choosing_Your_Event.pdf