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MEDIA RELEASE

Full steam ahead

Bots battle it out in Steampunk-themed FIRST® Robotics Competition at Taco Bell Arena March 31 and April 1.

Boise, March 20, 2017: Robots built by 35 high school teams will be steaming mad when they compete in this year's FIRST® Robotics Competition, which is themed after the Steampunk stylings of authors like Jules Verne and H. G. Wells.

School teams mostly from Idaho but from as far away as Canada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and California, will be at Taco Bell Arena, on March 31 and April 1 for the 2nd annual Idaho FIRST Robotics Competition. The event, co-sponsored by Idaho STEM Action Center, Boise State University, Tesoro, is free and open to the public.

Titled "FIRST Steamworks," the competition will have a retro-tech feel in which students build robots that must lob 'fuel cells' (in the form of balls) into a mock steam boiler to build enough fuel to operate a simulated steam-powered airship. Meanwhile, robots also must transport giant gears to the airship to engage the ship's propellers. Teams score points for each action. Finally, teams then must hoist the robots to their hovering airship to complete the round.

The Steampunk aesthetic combines science fiction or science fantasy with the design of industrial steam-powered machinery from the 1800s. In addition to books and graphic novels, Steampunk has been the backdrop for movies such as "Hugo" and "Wild Wild West."

This year's regional FIRST contest is the culmination of six weeks in which student teams design and order the parts for the robots, then build, program and test the bots.

"FIRST allows students the opportunity to engage in real science by designing, building and testing their own imagined creation of complex machinery. Students benefit by developing the advanced skills needed for tomorrow's workplace. Not to mention, it's really a lot of fun." Amy Moll, Dean of Engineering at Boise State University.

Teams that win the Idaho regional competition and possibly select award winners will move on to the FIRST national championship held April 19-22 in Houston and April 26-29 in St. Louis. In all, more than 85,000 high school students from around the world will participate in this year's competition, which is in its 26th year.

The FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition helps promote and foster science and technology learning among the nation's high school students, creating a new generation of engineers, programmers and scientists.

Video and photo opportunities for news media include:

- **Opening ceremonies:** Friday and Saturday, 8:30 to 9 a.m.
- **Qualification matches:** Friday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5:45 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
- **Final rounds:** Saturday, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- **Awards ceremonies:** Friday, 5:45 to 6:16 p.m. and Saturday, 4:30 to 6 p.m.
- **Pits:** Opens Friday and Saturday at 8 a.m.

A full press packet with additional materials, including a description of the game will be available at the Media desk at the stadium beginning Thursday, March 30. Digital copies of the packet are available at www.idahofrcregional.org/media/

For more information and to view the "FIRST Steamworks" demo, please visit www.idahofrcregional.org