



Tea-time for excavators

Using a 12-tonne Hitachi excavator to pour a cup of tea and cutting a slice of a cake is no easy task but for New Zealand's top operators battling it out for the national title, it's a piece of cake.

The boys and their toys will be back at Central Districts Field Days to do battle in the National Excavator Operator Competition.

Nine of the country's top excavator operators and will be taking on current title holder Steve Galbraith from Napier.

Challenges this year will include pouring a cup of tea, slam dunking a basketball and transporting an egg.

"They make it look so easy," says New Zealand Contractors' Federation executive officer Malcolm Abernethy.

"The machines are really sophisticated with computers and basically become an extension of



their body. You can't just jump in one and pour a cup of tea, it takes concentration and skill."

Aside from the fun and entertaining challenges, contestants will also be undergoing two days of rigorous construction, planning and loading challenges designed to test their operator skills and industry knowledge to the limit.

Children visiting Central Districts Field Days will have the opportunity to get some hands-on experience and have a go at operating Gerald the Giraffe digger.

"Challenges are designed to test the precision and expertise of the operators who will have to delicately manoeuvre either a 12-tonne or six-and-a-half tonne Hitachi machine around the course.

"These tasks demonstrate what excavators can achieve in their day-to-day work and how specific their tasks can be as they navigate drain pipes, gas pipes and electricity cables."

Contestants will also be judged on the health and safety precautions they take and their planning and foresight.

In return for a gold coin donation, children will be able to get some hands-on experience and have a go at operating Gerald the Giraffe, a CablePrice Hitachi 1.7 tonne digger with some help from one of the competitors.

Proceeds will go to the Child Cancer Foundation.