



The annual Physics Day at Lagoon Amusement Park, which is co-sponsored by INL and Utah State University, lets students experience the thrills of physics first-hand through rides and contests.

## Annual 'Physics Day' at Lagoon impacts students' learning

by [Janet Barton](#), INL Nuclear Science & Technology communications

Those who think physics is boring may never have thought about it while riding a roller coaster.

That was not the case for more than 6,000 students and burgeoning physicists who recently participated in the 21st annual Physics Day at Lagoon Amusement Park in Farmington, Utah. The event, co-sponsored by Idaho National Laboratory and Utah State University, gave students the opportunity to experience first-hand the thrills of physics.

Physics Day activities and contests were designed to correlate with the physics curriculum middle school and high school students are taught in the classroom. At the event, students competed in robot grudge matches, egg drop engineering, the Wind Energy Challenge and other activities that provided real-world applications for what they learned.



***Ninth graders from Idaho Falls' Clair E. Gale Junior High School participate in [Physics Day at Lagoon](#).***



***Physics Day participants could compete for prizes by completing a workbook featuring physics questions about rides at Lagoon.***

Students used key physics principles to showcase their engineering innovation in a Ride Design Contest by designing and modeling roller coasters. At another location, artistic students participated in the Physics Day Logo Design Contest to create the logo for next year's event. The students were also given an optional workbook featuring physics questions on rides at Lagoon.

Participants who won contests or turned in their workbooks were eligible for prizes, including free tickets to Lagoon and T-shirts.

Student enthusiasm illustrated the growing success and participation in the annual event. MacKenzie O'Bleness, a ninth-grader who won the logo contest and prize, said Physics Day was the "best school-excused absence ever!" She and her fellow classmates from Clair E. Gale Junior High School in Idaho Falls agreed they would love to go again.

Students also participated in other challenges at various locations in the park. On Lagoon's formidable double-looped Colossus ride, students experienced g-forces and measured the ride's acceleration for the G-Force Contest. Other activities included the Physics Bowl and Sky Drop Contest in which students designed and built a contraption that would protect a single egg dropped from the Sky Coaster chair lift.

"It was great to show what we have learned in our science class," said Gale ninth-grader Camille Bidstrup. "And it was lots of fun, too."

Utah State and INL sponsor the event each year because they hope to make learning about physics a fun experience and to inspire students from Utah, Wyoming, Idaho and Nevada to take an early and active interest in possible physics careers.

"I enjoy participating in this event each year because I can see where the kids get excited about [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics \(STEM\) education](#)," said Brenda Greenhalgh of INL's Education Programs Department. "And, hopefully, they will pursue a career in one of these areas."

[Feature Archive](#)



***Physics Day at Lagoon aims to make learning about physics a fun experience that inspires interest in possible physics careers.***