

National Guard responds to storm in seven states (National Guard Bureau)  
<http://www.ng.mil/news/archives/2009/12/122109-National.aspx>

ARLINGTON, Va., (12/21/09) -- National Guardsmen in seven states were called to duty over the weekend after a record snowfall blanketed the Northeast.

More than 1,200 Guardsmen in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, the District of Columbia and North Carolina responded to requests for road clearance, evacuation and other related missions.

In Virginia, about 400 Guardsmen were initially mobilized, but Gov. Tim Kaine authorized another 600 Soldiers on Dec. 20. According to a press release from the state, more than 750 Soldiers and Airmen were expected to be on duty throughout the state by the afternoon of Dec. 20.

"The Virginia National Guard continues to assist state and local agencies across the commonwealth with rescuing stranded motorists, transporting critical supplies, assisting with sheltering operations and transporting patients and health care professionals," said Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, the adjutant general of Virginia.

Newman explained that the Virginia Guard receives missions through the state Department of Emergency Management based on requests from local emergency response organizations. Any citizens, who feel they need support from the Guard, should make their request through their local first responders, not directly to the Guard.

On Dec. 20, Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team, based in Staunton, Va., helped state police wake stranded motorists along I-81 in an effort to get traffic moving, while Airmen from the 203rd RED HORSE Civil Engineering Squadron, based in Virginia Beach, Va., were scheduled to transport cots to a shelter in Wise County. Other missions included aerial reconnaissance, transporting food, water, blankets and other supplies, transporting stranded motorists and health care professionals and sheltering operations.

In West Virginia, 235 Guardsmen operating nine wreckers and two graders were used to clear the West Virginia Turnpike on Dec. 19. "They had plows moving down the toll road as well as trucks that could move vehicles stuck in the middle of the road out of the way to get things moving," Air Force Lt. Col. Mike Cadle, the public affairs officer for the West Virginia Guard, told local news outlets.

On Dec. 20, the Guard continued "wellness checks" throughout the state. "We have Humvees out in many of those effected communities," Cadle said. "And those Humvees have food and water. We're traversing some of the more rural, hard to get to areas.

Cadle said the West Virginia Guard gets its missions from the state's Office of Emergency Services, and their job isn't done until the governor releases them.

"We'll continue pressing," he said. "We don't have a timeline. We're going to be working until the county directors and the state officials tell us that we're finished."

In Kentucky, 170 Guardsmen were deployed to remove fallen trees from roads and help with evacuations in the eastern areas of the commonwealth. Thirteen counties in southeastern Kentucky had declared a state of emergency as of Dec. 20.

Army Brig. Gen. John Heltzel, deputy commander of the Kentucky National Guard, told local news outlets that about 87,000 homes were without power as of noon on Dec. 20. The Public Service Commission listed power outages in 26 counties, primarily in Eastern Kentucky.

Heltzel said the main power lines are up, but wires feeding power into many residential areas are down. He expects power to be restored to half the affected area by Wednesday, with the rest done by Sunday.

"We hope to make everybody happy and beat that," he said.

In Maryland, more than 140 Guardsmen were on duty over the weekend, but that number dropped to 19 today. About 46 Humvees and five ambulances were used throughout the state. A state of emergency was declared in the state.

"The majority of the requests we received during the snowstorm were to support local and state law enforcement agencies," said Army Brig. Gen. James A. Adkins, the adjutant general of Maryland. "Use of our Humvees ensured that first responders were able to get where they needed to go to provide critical services to the citizens of Maryland."

In Delaware, 61 Guardsmen operating 15 Humvees, five light medium tactical vehicles (LMTV) and four wreckers were on duty throughout the state to respond to emergency transportation and rescue requests. A state of emergency was declared in New Castle and Kent counties.

"People are strongly advised to stay off the roads in Kent and New Castle counties," Gov. Jack Markell told local news outlets. "Our state agencies have been working together to prepare for and combat the effects of this storm. Remaining off the roads helps them in this effort and is important to public safety."

Dubbed Operation Arctic Endeavor II, Delaware Guard officials said they are prepared to provide special needs sheltering, transportation support using highly mobile multi-wheeled vehicles and LMTVs, road clearing support and any other support as required by the Delaware Emergency Management Agency.

The Delaware Guard has also prepared three task forces pre-positioned at four Emergency Operation Centers (EOC) throughout the state, Guard officials said. Task Force New Castle has locations in Belvedere and Wilmington, Task Force Sussex is in Georgetown and Task Force Kent is in Smyrna. Each EOC is staffed with Humvees, a LMTV, a large tow truck and two Guardsmen per vehicle.

In the District of Columbia, 27 Guardsmen and 10 Humvees are standing by to provide transportation support. A state of emergency has been declared in the district.

In North Carolina, 24 Guardsmen were called in Saturday morning to help the North Carolina Highway Patrol dig out and remove abandoned cars from the highway.