

COVID-19 Best Practice Information: Use of the National Guard

Background

- Response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) will necessitate a whole of community and whole of nation response. Members of the National Guard can be activated to respond to a pandemic under state law, or under Titles 10 and 32 of the U.S. Code.
- As of March 28, 2020, over 13,880 National Guard soldiers and airmen have been activated to support COVID-19 response efforts.¹
- The following is a list of key findings and considerations for jurisdictions and communities regarding ongoing COVID-19 pandemic operations across the country. These are best practices for consideration and do not constitute and should not be considered as guidance in any way.

Key Considerations

- State governors have the flexibility to use National Guard personnel and resources to meet a broad array of requirements, including supporting public health efforts.
- There are about 450,000 National Guard members, located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three U.S. territories, with logistical and other capabilities including airlift, ground transportation, command and control, engineering, kitchens, tents, and medical personnel.
- If necessary, the state's National Guard can assist state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce quarantines or other containment measures ordered by state or local authorities.

Lessons Learned Related to COVID-19 Operations and the National Guard

Preparedness and Activation

- **Potential Best Practice:** Florida National Guard is training members on how to properly protect themselves through basic handwashing, hand cleansing and personal care.²

¹ 2020 National Guard, Secretary Esper enhances National Guard's rapid COVID-19 response, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2129577/secretary-esper-enhances-national-guards-rapid-covid-19-response/>

² 2020 National Guard, FLNG helps with drive-through virus testing in South Florida, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2114535/flng-helps-with-drive-through-virus-testing-in-south-florida/>



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Personal Protective Equipment

- **Potential Best Practice:** The Michigan National Guard is working with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to assemble and load critical personal protective gear for local health departments.³
- **Potential Best Practice:** The West Virginia National Guard trained first responders from Kentucky and West Virginia how to properly use personal protective equipment (PPE).⁴
- **Strength:** Guard members wear PPE while working in mobile screening facilities to further protect against potential transmission of the virus.⁵

Operational Support

- **Potential Best Practice:** The Florida National Guard conducts a screening of Guard members prior to their arrival and start of duty to ensure they are not bringing the virus into the unit.²
- **Potential Best Practice:** The Louisiana National Guard Soldiers and Airmen support current operations, including medical support, engineering assessment support, shelter security, traffic control point and drive-through testing site support, and to provide liaison officer teams to parish Emergency Operations Centers.⁶
- **Potential Best Practice:** The Wisconsin National Guard has brought on additional planners, logisticians, and command and control elements to manage and execute future missions.⁷
- **Potential Best Practice:** The Puerto Rico National Guard is screening passengers arriving at the Island's main airport to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.⁸
- **Potential Best Practice:** The New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are cleaning public buildings, warehousing and delivering bulk supplies of sanitizer to New York State local governments, and delivering meals to students in need.⁹
- **Potential Best Practice:** The New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen staff two State call centers handling questions to ease public worry.⁹

³ 2020 National Guard, Michigan National Guard helping distribute COVID-19 supplies,

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2117663/michigan-national-guard-helping-distribute-covid-19-supplies/>

⁴ 2020 National Guard, W.Va Guard experts train first responders in PPE safety,

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2115399/wva-guard-experts-train-first-responders-in-ppe-safety/>

⁵ 2020 National Guard, Guard members continue to assist in COVID-19 response,

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2114410/guard-members-continue-to-assist-in-covid-19-response/>

⁶ 2020 National Guard, La. Guard assists New Orleans drive-through testing sites,

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2119430/la-guard-assists-new-orleans-drive-through-testing-sites/>

⁷ 2020 National Guard, Wisconsin National Guard ready to support state,

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2120331/wisconsin-national-guard-ready-to-support-state/>

⁸ 2020 National Guard, Puerto Rico Guard screening airport passengers for COVID-19,

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2115731/puerto-rico-guard-screening-airport-passengers-for-covid-19/>

⁹ 2020 National Guard, Hundreds of New York National Guard members respond to COVID-19,

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2115761/hundreds-of-new-york-national-guard-members-respond-to-covid-19/>

- **Strength:** National Guard members on duty have been disinfecting public spaces, distributing food, assisting with transportation and logistical support of health officials, and coordinating with state and local health and emergency managers.¹⁰
- **Strength:** The Tennessee Air National Guard used their C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft to deliver 500,000 swabs to be added to COVID-19 test kits.¹¹ Jurisdictions should consider what transportation roles the National Guard may be able to serve in supporting operations.

Topics for the “Best Practices” series are generated from crowd sourced suggestions. Have an idea? Let us research it! Organizations and individuals can e-mail best practices or lessons learned to fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov.

¹⁰ 2020 National Guard, Guard has long supported officials in health emergencies, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2116120/guard-has-long-supported-local-officials-in-health-emergencies/>

¹¹ 2020 National Guard, National Guard Ramping Up COVID-19 Response, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2118561/national-guard-ramping-up-covid-19-response/>