



# Ohio Adjutant General's Department

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## **The Ohio National Guard: Ready for disaster response at a moment's notice**

**Story by Stephanie Beougher  
Ohio National Guard Public Affairs**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The closest ocean shoreline to Ohio is about 300 miles away, yet the Ohio National Guard is prepping for a new hurricane season. That's because a series of major hurricanes that hit the United States last year drove home the importance of being ready at a moment's notice.

The Ohio National Guard was engaged with rescue and relief efforts in August and September 2017, with more than 400 of its Airmen and Soldiers deployed to Texas, Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. They provided assistance and equipment in the form of communications, medical aid, transportation, shelters, mobile kitchens, water purification and imagery analysis.

While the missions were successfully completed, there were lessons learned from such an unprecedented hurricane season. Col. Jeffrey Suver, director of joint operations for the Ohio National Guard, said last year's experience showed the importance of a joint staff that could move large numbers of personnel and equipment over the Atlantic Ocean to the islands.

"Having Air Guard liaison officers and air movement specialists in the joint operations center was critical to our success," Suver said. "They were able to interface with systems the Army Guard could not see and were tied in tightly with National Guard Bureau's Crisis Action Team to ensure we tracked and obtained vital airlift needed."

To improve on disaster response this year, a full-time Air National Guard liaison has been added to the ONG's Joint Operations Center, or JOC. Ohio is also working with other states' National Guards to develop preformatted mutual aid agreements and cost estimates to allow quicker response through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. EMAC is a mutual aid system that can be used during governor-declared states of emergency or disaster to allow states to send personnel, equipment and commodities to assist with response and recovery efforts in other states.

Col. Justin Chapman, commander of the Ohio Air National Guard's 178th Wing Mission Support Group in Springfield, Ohio, said personnel and equipment are ready to support any state or territory in the country with any type of domestic emergency. "I think we have proven that regardless of the disaster and the location, the Ohio National Guard will be ready to respond immediately," he said. "The level of support Ohio provided to last year's hurricane disasters are all the proof you need to show this state's capability and commitment."

The 200th RED HORSE (Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer) Squadron, headquartered in Port Clinton, Ohio, was among the units that provided aid during last year's hurricanes. The squadron's commander, Col. Daniel Tack, explained why the Ohio National Guard is so well-suited to respond to natural disasters such as hurricanes.

"First, our geographic location precludes us from most of the damage from a disaster like a hurricane, allowing our personnel to deploy without the need to take care of our own damage," Tack said. "Second, due to our large Ohio National Guard force of more than 16,000 Citizen-Airmen and -Soldiers, we have a diverse set of capabilities. We have cargo aircraft, construction units, communication units, transportation units, military police and many other assets needed to assist the communities in need."

The Ohio National Guard is also preparing for any type of natural disaster that may hit within the state's borders, by working closely with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency and other key partner agencies.

"We have participated in seminars, table top exercises and planning sessions to ensure that we are ready for any local incident. Building those relationships and exercising together ahead of any sort of real incident is key to preparedness," Suver said.

Throughout its 230-year history, the Ohio National Guard has responded after numerous natural disasters in Ohio, including the 1974 Xenia tornado, the 1978 blizzard and the 2012 derecho windstorm event.

Predictions for this year's Atlantic hurricane season are for fewer storms than normal, but the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is still emphasizing the importance of being prepared. The Ohio National Guard is doing exactly that — and will be mission capable at all times, ready to respond within hours of receiving a call to help Ohio citizens or our neighbors across the United States.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** High resolution photos to support this story are available on the [Defense Video Imagery Distribution Site \(DVIDS\)](#).

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The Buckeye Guard digital magazine and newscast—

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