

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

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## Introduction

Response to the coronavirus will necessitate a whole of community and whole of nation response. This document is one of a series designed to facilitate the sharing of best practices from other disaster events combined with the experiences of communities that have already faced some of the COVID-19 challenges. It is not exhaustive, but instead highlights some key areas where communities could benefit from the experiences of others. Each community knows their requirements best. Information will be updated as we receive information about more community best practices.

For the most updated health-related guidance and information on coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov).

## Background

- 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.<sup>1</sup>
- This post contains considerations and recommendations from previous incidents and existing information, which may be helpful to support planning efforts for COVID-19 efforts.

## 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.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2129577/secretary-esper-enhances-national-guards-rapid-covid-19-response/>



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

## Preparedness and Activation

- **Area for Improvement:** Without appropriate joint training between Guard forces and potential supported agencies, command and control and interoperability issues may arise.<sup>2</sup>
  - Mitigating Action/Resource: States should refer to existing processes and procedures for assessing the need for such forces and how they would be used in the event they are needed.
  - Mitigating Action/Resource: Conduct just-in-time training or capability-specific exercises prior to deployment.
- **Area for Improvement:** Activation of a state's National Guard can be an eligible expense under FEMA Public Assistance Category B Emergency Protective Measures. However, states still have to cover initial costs prior to receiving reimbursement.<sup>3</sup>
  - Mitigating Action: State Emergency Management Agencies should work with FEMA to identify options to expedite Category B Emergency Protective Measures funding to alleviate cash flow issues related to National Guard deployments.
- **Potential Best Practice:** Florida National Guard is training members on how to properly protect themselves through basic handwashing, hand cleansing and personal care.<sup>4</sup>

## 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.<sup>5</sup>
- **Potential Best Practice:** The West Virginia National Guard trained first responders from Kentucky and West Virginia how to properly use personal protective equipment (PPE).<sup>6</sup>
- **Strength:** Guard members wear PPE while working in mobile screening facilities to further protect against potential transmission of the virus.<sup>7</sup>

## 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.<sup>8</sup>
- **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

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<sup>2</sup> 2006 [Homeland Security Council, National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan](#)

<sup>3</sup> 2020 [Council of Governors, Letter to Secretary of Defense Mark Esper](#)

<sup>4</sup> 2020 [National Guard, FLNG helps with drive-through virus testing in South Florida](#)

<sup>5</sup> 2020 [National Guard, Michigan National Guard helping distribute COVID-19 supplies](#)

<sup>6</sup> 2020 [National Guard, W.Va. Guard experts train first responders in PPE safety](#)

<sup>7</sup> 2020 [National Guard, Guard members continue to assist in COVID-19 response](#)

<sup>8</sup> 2020 [National Guard, FLNG helps with drive-through virus testing in South Florida](#)

Emergency Operations Centers.<sup>9</sup>

- **Potential Best Practice:** The Wisconsin National Guard has brought on additional planners, logisticians, and command and control elements to manage and execute future missions.<sup>10</sup>
- **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.<sup>11</sup>
- **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.<sup>12</sup>
- **Potential Best Practice:** The New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen staff two State call centers handling questions to ease public worry.<sup>13</sup>
- **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.<sup>14</sup>
- **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.<sup>15</sup> Jurisdictions should consider what transportation roles the National Guard may be able to serve in supporting operations.

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<sup>9</sup> 2020 [National Guard, La. Guard assists New Orleans drive-through testing sites](#)

<sup>10</sup> 2020 [National Guard, Wisconsin National Guard ready to support state](#)

<sup>11</sup> 2020 [National Guard, Puerto Rico Guard screening airport passengers for COVID-19](#)

<sup>12</sup> 2020 [National Guard, Hundreds of New York National Guard members respond to COVID-19](#)

<sup>13</sup> 2020 [National Guard, Hundreds of New York National Guard members respond to COVID-19](#)

<sup>14</sup> 2020 [National Guard, Guard has long supported local officials in health emergencies](#)

<sup>15</sup> 2020 [National Guard, National Guard Ramping Up COVID-19 Response](#)