

Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Michigan Army National Guard Michigan Air National Guard

3411 N. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Lansing, Mich. 48906
(517) 481-8141

Rick Snyder
Governor

Maj. Gen. Gregory Vadnais
Director and Adjutant General

PRESS RELEASE

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Michigan Army National Guard to host Northern Exposure *Catastrophic disaster scenario to test Guard relief capabilities*

LANSING, Mich. – Teams from federal, state, and local law enforcement and disaster recovery agencies, along with approximately 2,000 members of the Michigan National Guard, will conduct a disaster response exercise, Northern Exposure, June 23-27, at various locations around Michigan.

Northern Exposure is a five-day, full-scale exercise rehearsing response to a simulated nuclear explosion in real-time. This effort will help ensure the readiness of the Michigan National Guard to provide support to local authorities in times of attack or disaster. An exercise of this type helps responders at all levels to coordinate and communicate effectively during any type of domestic incident.

The Michigan National Guard, Michigan State Police, U.S. Northern Command, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and local first responders will be participating at military installations in Grayling, Battle Creek, Alpena, Selfridge and Lansing and at civilian facilities in Muskegon, Battle Creek, Grand Rapids and Kentwood. This exercise will give cooperating agencies the opportunity to work together and practice disaster recovery systems and operations.

“Providing support to the governor in a time of crisis is one of our three core functions,” said Lt. Col. Raymond Stemitz, a Michigan Army National Guard officer and the exercise director. “Northern Exposure will give us an opportunity, on a large scale, to work with our military and civilian counterparts and refine our ability to provide timely disaster relief should the need arise.”

Planning for the exercise began late last year. “We have already learned so much about each other’s organizations by virtue of planning for this exercise,” said Stemitz. “After years of combat deployments, this exercise gives us an opportunity to practice another essential National Guard mission - providing disaster recovery assistance to Michigan’s citizens.”

When asked why the exercise is not restricted to the military installations in Michigan, Mike Bridges, a member of the planning staff, stated, “While our posts in Michigan offer world-class training facilities, it really came down to geography. Venues like Webb and Sun Chemical (in Muskegon), Kentwood Public School facilities (near Grand Rapids), Battle Creek-Lakeview High School and The Grand Rapids Butterworth Yard Waste Facility are close enough to allow local first responders to participate in the exercise without impacting their other duties.”

Stemitz said obtaining permission to use the off-installation facilities during the exercise posed some unique challenges to the planning staff from the Michigan Guard. “We were fortunate to start planning early with the

Kent County and Muskegon County Departments of Emergency Management who coordinated the use of these venues as they will really enhance the effectiveness of the exercise. Realism is critical, the time to work out procedural and technical bugs is during the simulation – not during an actual emergency. The more realistic we can make the exercise without alarming nearby residents and bystanders, the better.”

Plans for the scenarios involve smoke, debris, noise, and other disaster-related items intended to make the exercise as realistic as possible. Additionally, role-players will be used to simulate casualties and affected community members who are in need of lifesaving or assistance on a large scale.

Training on the off-post venues will be restricted to daylight hours. “To maximize training and minimize impact to locals, we are planning on the civilian venues to be ‘solar powered,’ meaning participating agencies will train on them from about 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.,” said Bridges.

Agencies currently scheduled to participate in the exercise include: Michigan State Police, FEMA Region V, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan Task Force 1 (Search and Rescue), Muskegon County Sheriff and HAZMAT Team, Muskegon County Emergency Management, Muskegon Heights Fire Department, Eggleston Fire Department, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MI-DEQ), City of Battle Creek Police Department, Kent County Emergency Management - City of Grand Rapids, Calhoun County Public Health Department and the Region V Health Care Coalition, Kent County Road Commission, Kentwood / TriCom, Walker, and Plainfield Fire Departments. Cities of Grand Rapids, Walker, Grandville, Kentwood, and Wyoming Departments of Public Works. St. Mary’s, Metro and Butterworth Hospitals, and the Salvation Army.

About the Michigan National Guard

The Michigan National Guard’s 10,000 Soldiers and Airmen stand ready to serve both state and nation. With operations at three airfields, two major training bases and more than 40 armories around the state, Michigan National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are ready to provide a wide-range of disaster response and other support to civil authorities, while maintaining a high degree of combat readiness. In 2013, the Michigan Guard participated in exercises Northern Strike and Vibrant Response. 2014 saw the Michigan Guard participate in exercises Golden Coyote, Saber Strike, Northern Strike, eXportable Combat Training Capability, Winds of Change and Beyond the Horizon. Northern Exposure is one of several exercises planned for 2015 and is expected to get even bigger over the next few years.

About Northern Exposure

Northern Exposure is a training exercise, simulating a nuclear detonation in the Grand Rapids area, June 23-27, 2015, involving the Michigan National Guard, Michigan State Police, FEMA, local law enforcement agencies and other first responders at various locations in the state of Michigan to include our military installations in Grayling, Battle Creek, Alpena, Selfridge and Lansing as well as some civilian facilities located in Muskegon, Grand Rapids and Kentwood. This exercise will give cooperating agencies the opportunity to work together and practice disaster response to ensure the best support possible in the event of an actual incident.

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MEDIA ADVISORY:

Media members should contact the Michigan National Guard Public Affairs Office at 517-481-8141 to schedule interviews, and to film or photograph exercise events.