

VNG wraps CVC support, continues mobile vaccinations

Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen continue to provide support to the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Department of Emergency Management as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. VNG mobile vaccination support teams continue to operate across the commonwealth, while the task force assigned to provide logistics and administrative support to Community Vaccination Clinics has concluded their mission.

The VNG task force providing mobile vaccination support added new members from the outgoing CVC support task force, and is continuing to adapt to an ever-changing mission as VNG support of COVID-19 response operations enters July, 15 months after initially starting with testing support in April 2020.

“After transitioning from COVID testing to vaccinations, the strike teams were primarily utilized at large community testing events,” said Lt. Col. Health Phillips, commander of the task force providing mobile vaccination support. “Now, as the total vaccinated population numbers have reached 40 to 60%, we are focusing on mobile sites, for individuals who could not make it to the vaccination PODs in the higher population areas.”

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/x6AG5>



A Virginia National Guard Soldier administers a COVID-19 vaccination on board a ship June 22, 2021, in Norfolk, Virginia, as part of the VNG's ongoing mobile vaccination support mission.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

First Army assists with 29th ID validation for Operation Spartan Shield

Following the announcement for its call to overseas service to support Operation Spartan Shield, the Virginia Army National Guard's Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division successfully conducted its post-mobilization at North Fort Hood, Texas.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/x6AGs>

DMA managers participate in inaugural Leader Development Course

Virginia Department of Military Affairs supervisors participated in the inaugural DMA Leader Development Course June 15-17, 2021, at Defense Supply Center Richmond, Virginia.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/x6AG7>

29ID Soldiers participate in Supporting Warrior Action Team training

Soldiers assigned to the Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division, along with Soldiers from various Fort Hood-based units, recently participated in Supporting Warrior Action Team training at Fort Hood, Texas.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/x6AGp>

Logistics officer balances family with military career

Lt. Col. Alyssa Astphan grew up in a military family, and continuing her family's legacy of military service always seemed like a given. From the time she knew about the concept of careers, she knew hers would be spent in the military.

Read more: <http://go.usa.gov/x67fY>

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HART trains on rooftop rescue hoists during quarterly exercise

Virginia National Guard aviation crews and Chesterfield County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Scuba Rescue Team members trained on rescue hoist operations during a training exercise June 8-10, 2021, in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

The VNG aviators and Chesterfield rescue crews make up the Virginia Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team, providing rotary wing rescue hoist capabilities which can conduct aerial rescue evacuations. It's a program that VNG and Chesterfield County has been partnering together on for years, sharpening their skills during quarterly training exercises.

During their training, the HART made use of unique facilities at the Chesterfield Public Safety Training Center to practice confined space rescue hoists from car rooftops and buildings.

On the final day of the exercise, VNG aviators flew their specially-outfitted UH-60 Black Hawk over a multi-story concrete building used to train Chesterfield's firefighters. There, the team practiced rescue hoists from balconies and parapets, requiring precise placement of a Scuba Rescue Team member to reach a survivor, harness them in, and lift them to safety.

"Periodically we get the opportunity, when Chesterfield's training site isn't being used, to use the tower assembly," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Shane Leipertz, one of HART's pilots and the standardization pilot for the Virginia Army National Guard. "This creates a real dynamic for the crew, with much more of a sense of realism and urgency. The more of that we can do obviously the more prepared we're going to be."

Chesterfield firefighter Justin Bennett, the HART training officer, said elevated, confined spaces presents unique challenges.

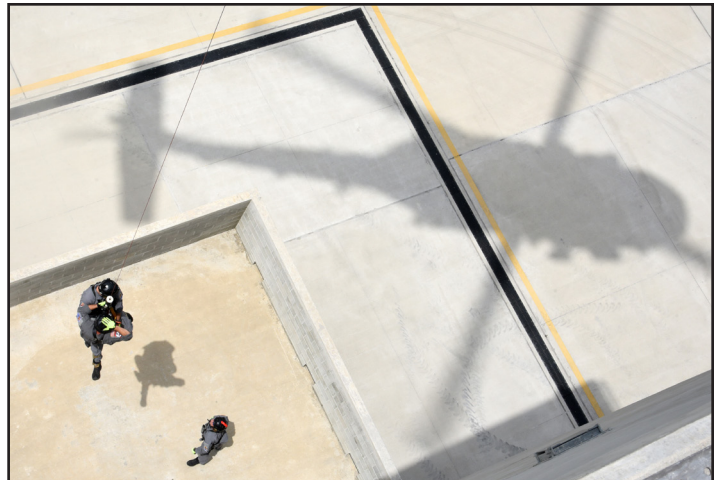
"We're using a balcony as a more confined space. It's challenging, it's something different than an open field," said Bennett. "When you start getting into more elevated positions of confined space, it makes it challenging for everybody. It's challenging for the technicians going down the hoist and for the pilots as far as reference points and hovering goes. But, it's no problem. We do the same thing whether it's up high or down low. We do the same process each time."

While challenging, the team of aviators and rescue technicians are more than up for the task. The partnership the two organizations has built over the last ten years is a solid one, Bennett said.

"It started in 2011 just talking with each other and it developed from that. We started out doing hoists with the Lakotas with minimal gear. It started small," said Bennett. "Now, it's just amazing, the crew coordinations that take place inside the aircraft. It's second to none. I know what the crew chief is going to do, he knows what I'm going to do. As civilians with the fire department, technicians riding with the Guard, it's amazing how far it's come."

Leipertz said that strong partnership is especially vital in planning for hurricane response.

"We're a coastal state. We need to pay particular attention to the Hampton Roads areas in terms of our preparation, and working with our partners around the state and with other states," said Leipertz.



Virginia National Guard aviation crews and Chesterfield County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Scuba Rescue Team members train on confined-space rescue hoist operations June 10, 2021, in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

The HART provides a unique capability to support the Virginia Department of Emergency Management during storms and floods, according to Bryan Saunders, the VDEM chief of Search and Rescue Programs.

"The HART program is an amazing addition to Virginia's response to those impacted by disasters," said Saunders. "Having these resources within Virginia not only gives us a faster response to the disaster, but also provides valuable input as to the capabilities of other hoist-type rescue teams as they begin populating the roster in the Air Ops Branch."

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/x6AGP>

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