

VNG gearing up for Milton, winding down Helene support

The Virginia National Guard is gearing up Oct. 9, 2024, to support Florida as they prepare for the expected impacts of Hurricane Milton while it winds down Hurricane Helene support in Virginia. The VNG already sent a helicopter to Florida and is mustering approximately 220 Soldiers and Airmen to provide engineer, transportation and general support capabilities.

The VNG also has approximately 10 Soldiers continuing a water pipeline damage assessment mission in the Abingdon, Virginia, area. As many as 40 Soldiers were on duty in the area providing high mobility transport, debris reduction with chain saws and food and water distribution.

The VNG is supporting Florida with capabilities requested through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

A VNG Black Hawk helicopter crew and members of the Chesterfield County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Scuba Rescue Team deployed Oct. 8 from Sandston and have safely arrived in Florida to provide rescue hoist capabilities. The VNG Black Hawk crews and Chesterfield first responders form the Virginia Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team.

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2p8bwsre>



A Virginia National Guard Soldier assigned to the Cedar Bluff-based 1033rd Engineer Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group assists with food and water distribution Oct. 6, 2024, in Damascus, Virginia.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

VNG AASF holds top spot for aviation maintenance readiness

For three years running, the Virginia National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility has ranked first in the nation for equipment readiness. Located in Sandston, Virginia, the AASF is home to the VNG's fleet of UH-60 Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopters.

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2c7eszn5>

VNG Soldier helps preserve family's memories during flood response

A Virginia National Guard Soldier on duty in the wake of Hurricane Helene helped return a battered and soggy photo album to a family member who thought it was lost forever.

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2de2yhcn>

Virginia National Guard Black Hawk helicopter headed to Florida

A Virginia National Guard Black Hawk helicopter crew and members of the Chesterfield County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Scuba Rescue Team deployed from Sandston, Virginia, to Florida Oct. 8, 2024.

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2rnb3cwf>

New senior enlisted leaders for 116th, 329th, MTC announced

Command Sgt. Maj. Irving N. Reed, the Virginia Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major, announced the selection of new senior enlisted leaders for three VAARNG commands Oct. 4, 2024.

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/4nh7c5hk>

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HART makes first real-world rescues, prepares for Florida mission

After years of intense training and planning, Virginia National Guard aviation crews and Chesterfield County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Scuba Rescue Team members conducted real-world rescue hoists of stranded citizens Sept. 27 and 28, 2024, in and around Abingdon, Virginia, due to flooding caused by the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

Together, the aviators and technical rescue specialists form the Virginia Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team, or HART, to provide rotary wing aviation rescue hoist capabilities, and can conduct aerial rescue evacuation in emergency situations.

While the team has been called on in the past to be on stand-by for emergency response missions, the rescues conducted in the wake of Hurricane Helene were the first real-world rescues the team has performed. HART rescued a total of six survivors, including five via rescue hoist. They also were able to transport ground rescue teams and conducted route and area search and rescue flights.

"It is an incredible feeling for the HART to be given the opportunity to conduct rescue operations and support the citizens of Virginia," said Chief Warrant Officer Mark Hoffman, lead pilot for VAHART. "So many people worked hard over the past 13 years building and training the VAHART and getting the team ready for operations like Hurricane Helene."

"The team has worked together to develop procedures and processes, and they've done extensive training and exercises over those years," said Chesterfield Fire & EMS Chief Edward L. Senter Jr. "It's really great to see this team come together and be used in the way it was intended."

In one case, an elderly survivor was rescued from the wreckage of his home, which washed away in a flood near Taylor's Valley, just outside of Damascus, Virginia. According to local news reports, the man and his wife were separated when their home split apart. She would eventually be rescued 16 hours later.

That was just one of HART's rescues in the region.

"The team also deployed rescue technicians twice to help facilitate and support two separate rescues by ground," said Hoffman. "Two people were extracted from logs and debris in the middle of a fast-flowing river. Two more men were extracted from Route 58, who had been isolated due to the roads being washed out. Finally, one elderly lady in a wheelchair was recovered from the side of the river and taken to a safer location. She was not in imitate danger, but ground teams were having difficulty finding a way to get the victim across the river."

"It was great to go down and help people out," said Capt. Charles Jackson, one of HART's pilots. "That's what we train on. We don't want it to happen, but when it does happen, we want to be able to go out there and help the people of Virginia."

Virginia HART originally formed as a partnership between VNG aviators and rescue specialists from Chesterfield Fire & EMS in 2011, since then, they have been called on during response operations including Hurricane Harvey in Houston and more recently Hurricane Florence in South Carolina, though they



The Virginia Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team conducts hoist operations rescuing six citizens Sept. 27 and 28, 2024, in the Abingdon area.

did not conduct any rescues in those cases. The team conducts quarterly training specifically to practice these kinds of rescues, including rescues from cars, building rooftops and aquatic environments, including swift water rescues.

"HART conducts realistic and challenging training," said Hoffman. "The team conducts search and rescue training evolutions throughout the year that focus on large area open flooding, swift water rescue, urban rescue and mountain operations. The detailed and disciplined training was key to our success during Hurricane Helene response operations."

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/mr2x45tv>

MORE ON THE WEB

529th CSSB publishes September 2024 newsletter

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/529thCSSBSEP2024>

VNG launches new Directorate of Resiliency

Photos on Flickr at <https://vngpao.info/58d7x2yw>

VNG schoolhouse celebrates graduation of 17 88Ms

Photos on Flickr at <https://vngpao.info/2p87m6ar>

88M course hosts retail chain trucking experts

Photos on Flickr at <https://vngpao.info/82mdk59e>

Sigl completes final UH-60 flight

Photos on Flickr at <https://vngpao.info/43n4dfs2>

