

HART receives Virginia Bronze Star for hurricane rescues

Virginia National Guard and Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services senior leaders presented the VNG Bronze Star to members of the Virginia Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team for their work performing rescues in 2024 during Hurricane Helene April 22, 2025, in Chesterfield, Virginia.

Brig. Gen. Todd Hubbard, the VNG Director of the Joint Staff, Col. Craig Lewis, the VNG State Aviation Officer and Chief Edward L. Senter Jr., Fire Chief for Chesterfield Fire and EMS, all thanked the VNG aviators and Chesterfield rescue technicians for supporting emergency operations in Southwest Virginia during Hurricane Helene. During those operations, HART made their first real-world rescue hoist after years of rigorous, realistic training.

“I want to say to the firefighters and Soldiers here, thank you for what you did, all the hours you’ve put in, all of the extra effort,” said Hubbard. “Thank you for being the type to put your needs to the side and put the needs of the commonwealth and our citizens to the front.”

Lewis also thanked the supporting players behind the scenes who make the HART mission possible.

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/57sbd5zr>



Virginia National Guard and Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services senior leaders present the VNG Bronze Star to members of the Virginia Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team April 22, 2025, in Chesterfield, Virginia.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Lt. Gen. Jon Stubbs highlights VNG excellence at Military Ball

Lt. Gen. Jonathan “Jon” Stubbs, director of the Army National Guard, joined Virginia National Guard leaders, Soldiers, Airmen and families at the 2025 annual Virginia National Guard Military Ball on April 26, recognizing the organization’s critical contributions to state and national missions.

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

Top VNG units, personnel recognized at 2025 Virginia Military Ball

Virginia National Guard senior leaders recognized high-performing units and individuals for training and retention excellence at the VNG Military Ball April 26, 2025, in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Read more and view photos at <https://vngpao.info/2p98yr9c>

Nye succeeds Reich as VNG command senior enlisted leader

Chief Master Sgt. John F. Nye took responsibility as the Virginia National Guard Command Senior Enlisted Leader from Chief Master Sgt. Kelly B. Reich during a ceremony April 11, 2025, in Richmond, Virginia.

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/yck9k9ep>

Blue and Gray division welcomes new CSM

The 29th Infantry Division welcomed Command Sgt. Maj. Eric J. Saxton as its new senior enlisted leader in a change of responsibility ceremony May 3, 2025, at the Fort Barfoot, Virginia, post stadium.

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/yc7wtwjp>

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34th CERFP conducts collective training exercise

Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airman conducted a collective training exercise responding to a simulated mass casualty radiological event April 28 - May 2, 2025, at Fort Barfoot, Virginia.

The Soldiers and Airmen are assigned to the Richmond-based 34th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package, or CERFP. During the exercise, search and rescue, decontamination and medical teams worked together to rescue simulated casualties portrayed by role players.

The exercise, conducted over three days, was one of two CTEs the CERFP is required by U.S. Northern Command to conduct annually.

"This exercise was the second of the year and sought to mobilize our elements from their home station to Fort Barfoot, perform a mass casualty decontamination site occupation and train element-specific skills," said Lt. Col. Andrew Czaplicki, commander of the 34th CERFP.

As the search and extraction team blasted through concrete and searched the rubble pile for victims, the decontamination element was ushering survivors through their station, cutting off contaminated clothing and using dry wipes to remove contaminants from their bodies. Survivors were then evaluated and treated by the medical team. CERFP personnel worked in small teams, rotating frequently and going through their own decontamination process. The survivors, portrayed by hired members of the community, were made up to simulate significant wounds and radiation burns, adding to the realism of the exercise.

The dry contamination method was new for the CERFP, and allows for the decontamination team to be flexible in different environments while still providing proper decontamination for survivors.

"Dry decontamination is a method of absorbing or removing either liquid or particulate contamination without the use of water," said Czaplicki. "Some hazards are water reactive and may cause immediate injury, accelerate environmental contamination, or otherwise inflict lasting harm to survivors of a CBRNE event. Dry decontamination also makes decontamination in areas where a ready supply of water is unavailable or would be dangerous to use, like extreme cold."

Despite the new concept, Czaplicki said the decontamination element performed well.

"This was the first time dry decontamination supplies and techniques were taught by instructors from the West Virginia-based Army Interagency Training and Education Center," Czaplicki said. "The training was an absolute success and I'm very pleased with how quickly our Soldiers were able to grasp the techniques and execute the tasks."

Weather during the exercise also provided a challenge, especially to personnel in full protective gear.

"Some of our training day temperatures exceeded 85 degrees and over 70% humidity, then add another 30 pounds of suit, a



Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airman conduct a collective training exercise simulating a response to a simulated mass casualty radiological event April 30, 2025, at Fort Barfoot, Virginia.

protective mask, elbow and knee pads plus whatever tools you are carrying," Czaplicki explained. "Our troops absolutely get a workout! Do that for three days straight and leaders have to start managing heat fatigue, which becomes our biggest challenge."

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Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2p92dtn5>

MORE ON THE WEB

Soldiers conduct mountain warfare exchange in Tajikistan

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/c4v6f2cw>

Senior VNG, JTFSC leaders visit 34th CERFP training

Photos on Flickr at <https://vngpao.info/28z52c86>

The Virginia Veterans Network

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/y67bwj7r>

Virginia National Guard Resiliency Resources

Read more at <https://va.ng.mil/Resiliency/>

Virginia National Guard Foundation

Read more at <https://vngpao.info/39res633>



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