Ohio Adjutant General's Department
Mike DeWine, Governor
Major General John C. Harris Jr., Adjutant General

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Ohio National Guard food bank support mission extends into December

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Ohio National Guard continues to assist 14 food bank locations and warehouses across the state.

The Ohio National Guard's response to fight the effects of the virus began when Gov. Mike DeWine signed a state active duty proclamation March 18 to activate personnel from the Guard and Ohio Military Reserve to assist with humanitarian efforts. About 350 Guard members are currently supporting the food bank mission.

Federal funding for the National Guard response nationwide for COVID-19 missions has been extended into December. While there are Ohio National Guard units transitioning out of the food bank mission in order to return to civilian and military obligations, new units are being brought in to continue to provide assistance at all 14 locations throughout the state.

"The length and scope of this mission has been unprecedented for the National Guard, and our work is not finished yet. I am proud of the efforts of every Soldier and Airman who has stepped up when their state needed them," said Maj. Gen. John C. Harris Jr., Ohio adjutant general. "The Ohio National Guard has not only significantly increased the productivity of food banks across the state during the pandemic, but our members have also made long-lasting and personal friendships with their food bank partners."

Since mid-March, the Ohio National Guard has packed more than 43 million pounds of food and has distributed more than 50 million pounds of food, as well as assisted in providing more than 700,000 meals to citizens in need throughout the state.

"For the past six months, an extraordinary group of men and women have sacrificed each day to serve their neighbors and friends struggling to access and afford food amid the pandemic," said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director, Ohio Association of Foodbanks. "We are so deeply thankful that the Ohio National Guard will extend its support of this mission for the next three months as we plan together for what's to come in 2021."

Hamler-Fugitt added that Ohioans can honor the sacrifices and service of the Ohio National Guard by contacting their local food bank to volunteer.

Ohio Army National Guard Col. David Rhoads leads the joint task force headquarters that provides management and oversight to all Ohio National Guard and State Defense Force (which includes the Ohio Military Reserve) support requested through the governor's office.

“We have a team of professionals from communities throughout the state who come with a diverse set of skills to include medical and logistics,” Rhoads said. “It is our privilege to be able to continue to serve the citizens of Ohio, and we are prepared to answer the call at a moment’s notice should more assistance be needed.”

In addition to the food bank mission, the Ohio National Guard is also assisting with community pop-up COVID-19 test sample collections, courier services to transport sample collections to laboratories, PPE warehousing and logistics, and quick response medical teams for temporary assistance at nursing facilities. Previous missions have included collaborating with regional partners to identify and develop alternate care sites to expand medical capacity, and providing medical and operational support at state and federal prisons.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: High-resolution photos to support this story are available on the Defense Video Imagery Distribution Site (DVIDS).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Stephanie Beougher, public information officer, at 614-506-3490 or stephanie.k.beougher.nfg@mail.mil.

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