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Alaska National Guard

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STATE OF ALASKA

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By Pfc. Grace Nechanicky
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Alaska National Guardsmen support the Division of Forestry

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — The Alaska Army and Air National Guard have been assisting the Division of Forestry with fire suppression and additional support on the McKinley and Swan Lake Fires since August 18.

The Division of Forestry submitted a request for resources through the State Emergency Operations Center on Sunday, August 18, requesting support for the McKinley Fire. In response, the National Guard dispatched 10 Guardsmen who are currently regulating traffic within the area at four traffic control points. Eight additional Guardsmen are scheduled to join the effort this week.

The Alaska National Guard also received a request to assist in support of Swan Lake Fire response efforts on August 19.

“We’re supporting [the fire] with four personnel from the Army [Guard] and five personnel from the Alaska Air Guard,” said Maj. Rafael Pacheco, deputy for strategy, plans and policy on the joint staff, Alaska National Guard. “We are doing traffic management in support of the Division of Forestry.”

The traffic control points are essential to the safety of individuals passing through the area because they allow better flow of traffic and accountability of personnel in hazardous areas.

According to Pacheco, all Soldiers and Airmen are on duty 24/7, rotating shifts in order to maintain proper flow of traffic in the areas.

Aviation support was provided by the Alaska Army Guard’s 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment. Two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were deployed from Bryant Army Air Field August 19 in support of fire suppression at the McKinley Fire. They dropped over 100,000 gallons of water along fire lines and hotspots.

The two helicopters spent nine and a half hours in the air and dropped a total of 145 buckets, totaling more than 100,000 gallons of water, on Monday at the McKinley Fire.

The two Black Hawks, as well as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter, remain on standby, prepared to support civil authorities upon request as needed.

According to the Alaska Division of Forestry, firefighters from Siskiyou National Forest and Warm Springs, Oregon are being sent to Alaska to join the wildfire response effort. They will be staged in the National Guard’s Alcantra Armory in Wasilla. The armory is a staging area for these personnel, and remains available for their use during their time in Alaska as needed.

The Alaska National Guard has responded to the call from civil authorities to support wildfire response efforts since July 1. The Guard has assisted at eight different fires this summer, in an area that spans over 90-thousand square miles. In addition to the McKinley and Swan Lake Fires, Alaska Guardsmen responded to fires in East Anchorage, Montana Creek, Malaspina, Klutina, Rampart, and Rainbow 2.

There are nearly four thousand Airmen and Soldiers in the National Guard who live, work and train in communities throughout Alaska. They are equipped and ready to respond as needed for the nation and state. During domestic response operations, the Guard partners with state and federal agencies to assist with resources, personnel, equipment and capabilities as requested.

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PHOTOS AND VIDEO

DVIDS links include selected full-resolution photos and video. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.)

Photos: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/5688843/alaska-army-guard-uh-60-black-hawks-support-fire-suppression>

Video: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/704168/alaska-army-guard-uh-60-black-hawks-support-fire-suppression>

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/704165/alaska-army-guard-uh-60-black-hawks-support-fire-suppression>



The Alaska Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, supports the McKinley Fire suppression mission Aug. 19, 2019, with two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. The helicopters dropped more than 100,000 gallons of water during a total of 9.5 flight hours in support of this mission. (U.S. Army National Guard photo courtesy of First Lt. Cody McKinney)

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The Alaska Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, supports the McKinley Fire suppression mission Aug. 19, 2019, with two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. The helicopters dropped more than 100,000 gallons of water during a total of 9.5 flight hours in support of this mission. (U.S. Army National Guard photo courtesy of First Lt. Cody McKinney)



The Alaska Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, supports the McKinley Fire suppression mission Aug. 19, 2019, with two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. The helicopters dropped more than 100,000 gallons of water during a total of 9.5 flight hours in support of this mission. (U.S. Army National Guard photo courtesy of First Lt. Cody McKinney)