



Cal OES
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
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California National Guard Helicopters Ready to Join Firefight in Northern California

SACRAMENTO – As dozens of wildfires threaten several Northern California communities, hot temperatures and dry lightning increase the risk of more fires in communities where vegetation is already dry due to exceptional to extreme drought conditions, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services has tasked the California National Guard (CNG) to activate specially-trained helicopter units to assist local, state and federal fire agencies.

The helicopters are a combination of 14 UH-60 Black Hawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters and three LUH-72 Lakota helicopters. The crews and assets from the California Army National Guard were activated under the direction of Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin at the request of Cal OES on behalf of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

The CNG helicopters and crews, which were deployed from around the state, will launch from Mather Army Aviation Support Facility and other locations to support CAL FIRE in battling wildfires across Northern California. The Black Hawks and Chinooks are equipped respectively with 660-gallon and 2000-gallon water buckets to fight the flames. The Black Hawks also are capable of functioning in a medevac capacity as well, with an onboard hoist for extracting injured personnel from rugged terrain. The Lakota will serve as an observation platform, capable of streaming near real-time video and thermal imagery of the fires to incident commanders on the ground.

The CNG helicopter crews will be working in coordination with the CAL FIRE and local firefighting crews in accordance with the Statewide Mutual Aid System that cuts across military, state and regional levels.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with residents of communities where fires are currently burning and at increased risk of occurring, especially when many already are dealing with the impacts of a drought conditions considered by federal scientists as Extreme or Exceptional," said Cal OES Director Mark Ghilarducci.

"Fortunately the California's Mutual Aid system provides us with the ability to reach out to the California National Guard as well as our other state and local partners for much needed resources when a fire or emergency threatens lives, property and the environment. The forward deployment of these will help incident commanders and the personnel they are directing save lives, homes and personal property as well as valuable watershed by providing critical resources within a moment's notice."

In 2013, California Army and Air National Guard aircraft dropped nearly 1.5 million gallons of retardant and water during nearly 1,500 aerial drops, predominantly across California and the Western States.

"This is the type of interagency coordination we train for every year alongside CAL FIRE and Cal OES," said Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin. "Given the extraordinary training and preparation we've completed this year, we're well positioned to support our partners going forward."

"The decades long relationship between the California National Guard and CAL FIRE has made deploying these resources a seamless operation when they are needed," said Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE director. "The extremely dry drought conditions we are facing this year make our access to these resources even more critical."

As a member of the state's mutual aid system, California National Guard aircraft and specially trained personnel are routinely utilized and deployed by Cal OES to respond and support to a wide range of emergencies including wildfires, search and rescue missions and other disasters man-made or natural disasters. This multi-agency coordination and resource sharing effort provides an efficient and effective way to combat the state's most difficult wildfires. For more information visit Cal OES, CAL FIRE or the California National Guard websites.