

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Kentucky National Guard Earthquake Response Exercise

The Kentucky National Guard, in conjunction with federal, state and local emergency response agencies, will conduct an annual statewide emergency response exercise March 1-8, 2008.

This exercise is based on a simulated 7.5 Richter-scale magnitude earthquake along the New Madrid fault and will combine Army and Air National Guard resources to test and validate the Guard's emergency response capabilities.

Exercise-related activities will primarily occur in the 24 Kentucky counties comprising Kentucky Division of Emergency Management Areas 1, 2 and 3 (Ballard, Calloway, Caldwell, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Daviess, Fulton, Graves, Hancock, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, McLean, Muhlenberg, Ohio, Todd, Trigg, Union, and Webster counties). Residents of these counties can expect to see increased military vehicle and aircraft (helicopter) traffic in their areas during this event.

By its conclusion, nearly 300 Kentucky Army and Air guardsmen will have participated in the exercise, not only in Western Kentucky, but at several other locations around the state.

With overall direction provided by the Kentucky National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters in Frankfort, air and ground operations conducted during the eight-day exercise will be directed by the Joint Forces Air Component (JFACC) and the Joint Forces Land Component (JFLCC).

Commanded by Brig. Gen. Howard P. Hunt III, the JFACC will be based at the Louisville Air National Guard Base where it will control operations of all aircraft participating in the exercise. The JFLCC, commanded by Brig. Gen. John Heltzel, will operate from the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville and will provide command and control for all ground forces.

Major Kentucky Guard units participating in the exercise include the 138th Fires Brigade, 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade, 75th Troop Command, 238th Regiment and the 41st Civil Support Team of the Kentucky Army Guard. Kentucky Air Guard participants include units of the Louisville-based 123rd Airlift Wing, to include the 123rd Operations Group, 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, 123rd Contingency Response Group (CRG), 123rd Medical Group, and the 123rd Security Forces Squadron.

In addition to the Kentucky National Guard and Kentucky Division of Emergency Management, other major participants include the Civil Air Patrol, as well as various state and local emergency response agencies.

Among the events scheduled to occur during the eight-day exercise will be deployment of the 123rd Contingency Response Group (CRG) to the Owensboro Airport. The 123rd CRG is currently the only unit of its type in the entire Air National Guard of the United States. Designed to set up and operate airbases both outside the US in wartime and in the US for domestic emergencies, it will deploy to the Owensboro Airport on the morning of March 3rd.

Additionally, the Guard will deploy two Joint Incident Site Communication Capability (JISCC) systems to provide communications support for the exercise. Developed after Hurricane Katrina destroyed land-based and cellular telephone communications capabilities along the Gulf coast, the JISCC's are self-contained communication suites which can provide voice, data and video capabilities in areas affected by a state emergency. The JISCC elements will deploy and operate in conjunction with mobile command posts operated by the Guard and Kentucky's Division of Emergency Management in order to provide emergency responders the ability to conduct daily teleconferences and view video of the affected areas in real-time.