

Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs: Exercise set for Columbia County

Posted on Tuesday, Nov 7, 2017

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

CONTACT: Capt. Joe Trovato | ngwi.pao@mail.mil | 608-242-3048

MADISON, Wis. — A two-day exercise in Columbia County and at Wisconsin's Emergency Operations Center in Madison kicks off Nov. 14. The exercise is in conjunction with a national-level exercise, known as GridEx, which takes place on Nov. 15-16.

The public should not be alarmed or concerned if they notice an increased law enforcement presence and military personnel, as well as vehicles and equipment, including non-military unmanned aerial vehicles, in the area beginning the morning of Nov. 14. The exercise will continue until mid-morning the next day.

GridEx aims to test local, county and state emergency management officials as well as the National Guard and private utilities partners on their responses to sustained power outages resulting from threats to the power grid. November's exercise will involve local, county and state law enforcement and first responders, Soldiers and Airmen from the Wisconsin National Guard and Alliant Energy partners who graciously offered the use of their Columbia County facility as a training site.

"GridEx is a great opportunity for our emergency management officials, the National Guard, local first responders and our private industry partners to train together so we are ready to respond if a threat impacted our power grid," Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general said. "While we simply can't train for every possible scenario, building relationships now makes us all better prepared if we had to respond to a real-world situation."

Over the past several years, Wisconsin has placed an emphasis on the importance of preparing for a long-term power outage and developing capabilities to respond to a cyber incident. As a result, the state began developing new partnerships, policies and plans as well as a strategy that culminates in a full-scale exercise in spring 2018 called Dark Sky, which will simulate a power outage caused by a combination of cyber and physical threats. GridEx will help all participants continue to build and refine processes to better prepare for the Dark Sky exercise as well as real-world scenarios.

The state Emergency Operations Center, the Business Emergency Operations Center, utilities and transmission providers in the state and approximately 65 Soldiers from the National Guard Reaction Force are all involved in the exercise along with Columbia County and a number of federal agencies, including the FBI and FEMA Region V.

While nationally, GridEx takes place Nov. 15 and 16, the exercise in Columbia County will begin Nov. 14 and conclude Nov. 15. For more information on GridEx, visit <http://www.nerc.com/pa/CI/CIPOutreach/Pages/GridEX.aspx>.