

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin National Guard Black Hawk helicopters sent to California to battle wildfires

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by Maj. Joe Trovato

Editor's Note: B-roll video of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters departing for California the morning of September 11, 2020 from Army Aviation Support Facility 2 at Dane County Regional Airport in Madison, Wis. is available at the following link: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/766763/b-roll-wisconsin-national-guard-aviation-unit-assists-with-california-wildfires>

Photos are also available on our website at: <http://dma.wi.gov/DMA/news/2020news/20205>

MADISON, Wis. — Two Wisconsin National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and approximately 15 Soldiers are en route to California to assist the California National Guard as it battles wildfires raging across the state.

The aircraft, along with crews and maintenance personnel from the Madison-based 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation, departed Madison for California today after Wisconsin received an Emergency Management Assistance Compact – or EMAC – request from California.

The California National Guard is serving in support of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and the crews from the Wisconsin National Guard will receive their specific mission taskings after arriving in California from the California Guard and local civil authorities there. The crews are prepared to employ water buckets to battle fires and take on any other assigned missions.

“This is what we train for,” said Lt. Col. Kurt Southworth, the commander of the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation. “We regularly train for search and rescue, fire suppression, and many other missions to support our fellow citizens and communities, so when this call came in, our crews were ready to answer the call in a short amount of time. I’m proud of our Soldiers and their dedication to serving our state and nation. This is why we serve and what it means to be a Citizen Soldier.”

EMAC is a mutual aid agreement that allows state-to-state assistance during declared states of emergency, and it allows other states to provide resources such as National Guard troops and equipment to the requesting state. The troops deploying to California are doing so in a State Active Duty status.

After travelling to California, the crews will be ready to begin fire suppression operations.