

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Guard engineer company wins Army award for maintenance excellence

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by Staff Sgt. Amber Peck

The 829th Engineer Vertical Construction Company (EVCC) out of Ashland and Spooner, Wisconsin was awarded the Chief of Staff Army Award for Maintenance Excellence (AAME) in the medium category, an award that recognizes exceptional accomplishment in maintenance.

“They won the Maintenance Super Bowl for our entire Army,” said Lt. Col. Bryan Huebsch, 724th Engineer Battalion commander.

The AAME is given to the best unit in the active Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve, for small, medium, and large units in each component.

The award citation reads:

The 829th EVCC has continued to exceed expectations and was able to provide exceptional engineer support due to the unit’s high maintenance standards. Through hard work and attention to detail, the 829th EVCC Soldiers earned an overall score of 96.5% on the Command Maintenance Evaluation and Training (COMET) inspection. They exhibited pride in their work by ensuring that all equipment was properly maintained and prepared in a timely manner, enabling Soldiers to continue to train to a higher standard. To their overall achievements, the 829th EVCC continually displayed determination, positive attitudes, and a commitment to one another that’ll continue to motivate the company to push forward for success.

Brig. Gen. Matthew Strub, Wisconsin's deputy adjutant general for Army, praised the Soldiers of the 829th at the award ceremony.

"It's because of your attention to detail, your care, and the importance that you place on maintenance that you're being recognized by none other than the Chief of Staff of the Army," he said.

Strub was recently an attendee at the Association of the United States Army conference in Washington, D.C., where he heard the Army secretary and chief of staff speak about how the Army is preparing for 2030.

"None of what they talked about is possible without maintenance, and that's why this award is so important," Strub said. "This is a Headquarters of the Department of the Army award. I couldn't be more proud of you."

In addition to the AAME, five Soldiers were awarded the Army Commendation Medal for their "competence, dedication, and exceptional work ethic which helped to result in the unit being awarded the AAME." Those five recipients were Sgt. Jacob Dachel, Sgt. Nathaniel Skinner, Sgt. Jacob Lavine, Sgt. First Class Dudley Gee, and 1st Lt. Benjamin Roskoskey.

Sgt. First Class Dudley Gee, a motor sergeant with the 829th EVCC since 2019, said that he couldn't have done it without the support of the entire unit — especially his maintenance platoon.

"We've earned it, and we've put in a lot of late days," Gee said. "This has been a goal of ours for a while."

"This award is something that units are intimidated by," Gee continued, "but with the command team we have here, we all have the same mentality of wanting to improve where we can and put our best foot forward."

Capt. Daniel Bruins, 829th EVCC commander, also recognized the unit as a whole.

"I want to stress that this is really a team [and] company-wide award," Bruins emphasized. "Everyone seated here today participated in some way. Whether it was doing a thorough [preventative maintenance check] by the training manual, not going off memory, defining our standard operating procedures, or spending countless hours behind the scenes making sure that we have mission-capable equipment when called upon."

Bruins could not overstate how proud he was of his unit and all of the work that they put in to get where they are now.

“While applying for this award, we often talked about the journey — win, lose, or draw, our goal was simply improvement,” he said. “To me, that really speaks to the caliber of the Soldiers within our ranks that have that internal motivation, that intrinsic drive to get better.”

Soldiers at the ceremony nodded in agreement as Bruins said this award will not be the pinnacle of the 829th EVCC.

“This cannot, and should not, be the high point of our maintenance program,” he said. “My challenge to our company is to continue to strive for those continuous improvements, that little extra, and being better every day. Our job is to be ready when called upon and to be our best. To be our most effective, we need mission-capable equipment.”

Huebsch’s advice echoed the same mindset.

“Sustained success is really hard, and that starts with our priority of people first,” Huebsch said. “People make those maintenance processes happen. People keep the discipline to properly maintain that vehicle and to do the proper documentation. So invest in those people, take care yourselves, and take care of your Soldiers — because if we don’t have those people and they’re not motivated to do that, we’re not going to continue to increase our level of sustained success.”

The objectives of the Army maintenance program are to improve and sustain field maintenance readiness, assess the maintenance component of unit readiness, improve efficiency and reduce waste, and recognize exceptional maintenance accomplishments and initiatives.