

# Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

## Burch named to Army Guard enlisted post

By Maj. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

The Nebraska Army National Guard's top command sergeant major is heading to Washington, D.C., to take over as the top Army National Guard enlisted sergeant in the nation. Command Sgt. Maj. Richard J. Burch, formerly the state command sergeant major for the Nebraska Army National Guard, was selected to become the new command sergeant major for the Army National Guard in mid-January. A native of Hastings, Neb., he was scheduled to take over the post in early March.

Burch said he's excited about the opportunity to represent the enlisted members of America's Army National Guard.

"It's a huge honor for me to be selected by the leadership of the Army National Guard," said Burch. "With that honor comes responsibility. I've never been one to shirk responsibility. I'm looking forward to the



Burch

See BURCH on 4

## Valenzuela named state command sergeant major

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor

Longtime Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier has been named to the state's highest enlisted Soldier position. Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, who has served as a Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier since his enlistment into the organization in 1979, was selected to become the Nebraska Army National Guard's state com-

mand sergeant major, Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, announced Feb. 2.

Valenzuela assumed his new post from departing Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, who



Valenzuela

See VALENZUELA on 4.

## Winter Weather Work



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Blowing Hot Air: Tech. Sgt. James Daberkow, a crew chief with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, operates the AirPlus de-icing system while removing ice from a KC-135R refueling tanker at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Jan. 9. The AirPlus is an enclosed, heated, operator cab which is attached to a twenty foot boom on a truck and produces a high-velocity heated air-jet.

By Senior Airman Brandon Kusek  
Staff Writer

## Keeping tankers ready to respond a chess match during icy months

When it comes to keeping the Nebraska Air National Guard's KC-135R Stratotankers ready to respond to any mission, even Mother Nature or Nebraska's sub-zero temperatures cannot get in the way of the members of the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

Still, with this winter's frequent storms and harshly cold conditions, the Nebraska Air National Guard maintenance specialists have been tested as they conduct a brilliantly orchestrated team effort

See SNOW OPERATIONS on 7.

## Guardsmen put holiday on hold to assist rescue crews

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor

Christmas day 2009 was one for the record books. With record amounts of blowing snow blanketing Lincoln and creating monster snow drifts throughout much of eastern Nebraska, holiday travel plans were disrupted or cancelled altogether. Travelers struggled to maneuver unplowed side streets hoping arterial roads were passable, while

others elected to just stay home and make the best of it.

Although the adverse weather conditions caused many people to simply postpone or cancel their holiday travel plans, for those people responsible for responding to medical emergencies, going out into the storm simply wasn't something that could be postponed.

That's exactly the situation the Lincoln Fire and Rescue Department found itself in when the department's ambulances began

struggling to reach the scenes of emergencies because of the snow. They had to find help.

The Nebraska National Guard was tasked to provide that help.

Sgt. Maj. Robert Morgan, operations sergeant major for 92nd Troop Command, said he had just finished the dessert portion of the Christmas dinner he was sharing with his wife when his phone rang.

A "Merry Christmas" greeting from Lt. Col. Kevin Garner, 92nd Troop Command executive officer,

was followed by laughter from both because they knew there was work to be done and their Christmas celebration would be cut short. Morgan quickly learned that members of the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion had been tasked with providing two four-wheel-drive Humvee ambulances to help the Lincoln fire and rescue personnel get to anyone needing assistance.

Although they are not outfitted with all of the amenities a civilian

See HUMVEES on 8.

## Nebraska aviators glimpse future

National Guard's newest light utility helicopter makes brief fuel stop in Lincoln

By Maj. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

Pilots, crew chiefs and support staff assigned to the Nebraska Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in Lincoln, Neb., had a chance to take a look at their not-so-distant future, Feb. 11, when a LUH-72A Lakota helicopter landed at the facility to receive fuel.

According to Maj. Mark Eschrich, commander of the District of Columbia's 121st Medical Company (Air Ambulance,) the helicopter was enroute to Kansas City, Mo., after spending five days in Rapid City, S.D., preparing for a major summer exercise. He said

See LAKOTA on 6.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Stopping For Fuel: A District of Columbia Army National Guard LUH-72A Lakota helicopter lands at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in Lincoln, Neb., Feb. 11. The helicopter, which is the newest helicopter in the Army National Guard inventory, landed in Lincoln to refuel during a flight between Rapid City, S.D., and Kansas City, Mo. According to Nebraska Army National Guard aviation officials, Nebraska is scheduled to receive its first LUH-72A helicopters in 2011.

## 155th Air Refueling Wing notches 10th outstanding unit award

By Maj. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing has been named a recipient of the 2009 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. This marks the 10th time that the Lincoln-based organization has earned the award in its 64-year history.

The 155th Air Refueling Wing is one of only 14 Air National Guard wings from across the United States to earn the award this year.

"The competition was extremely keen and each winner is commended for having been selected from an outstanding group of nominees," said Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, director of the Air National Guard in making this year's award announcement.

"The dedication and commitment of the members of these organizations enable the

See AFOUA on 5.



Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

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# Operation Snow Plow

Air Guardsmen team together to keep base functioning during Christmas blizzard

By Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube  
Staff Writer

Sammy Cahn penned it, several artists sang about it, however after a record of more than 24 inches of snow fell in Lincoln, Neb., in December, no one is asking for it anymore.

Snow blew into every nook and cranny that it could find, even under the heavy hangar doors at the Nebraska Air National Guard Base, home of the 155th Air Refueling Wing.

Then came the bitter cold temperatures... and even more wind.

Keeping the Nebraska National Guard air base up and running despite the difficult winter conditions quickly became a base-wide team effort.

Snow removal crews worked extra hours and through the holidays to keep the base streets and aircraft ramp cleared.

"During the December unit training assembly, the (155th) Civil Engineer (Squadron's) traditional Guardsmen had worked to clear snow from an earlier storm, so that helped," said Robert Doetker, a former member of the 155th Air Refueling Wing who is now working for the Nebraska Air National Guard as a temporary state employee.

Doetker said on Christmas Eve day, when everyone else was released at noon, the snow removal crew kept working, clearing the base streets and sidewalks.

That work extended long into the Christmas holiday.

"On Christmas day, Senior Master Sgt. Craig Anderson, the civil engineer facility manager, Dan Ptacek, a grounds worker, and I came in to keep the road to the base open and the large parking lot clean so the University of Nebraska football team could leave for San Diego," said Doetker.

The snow removal crew worked extra hours and through the holidays to keep the base streets and aircraft parking ramp cleared.

Cleaning the snow from the aircraft parking ramp proved to be quite another undertaking, said Doetker.

While members of the 155 Aircraft Maintenance Squadron used walk behind snowblowers or a bobcat to clear the snow from around the unit's KC-135R Stratotankers, the civil engineer members were cleaning the snow from the ramp.

According to Doetker, the ideal way of cleaning the ramp is to move all the snow from behind the aircraft, push the aircraft back into the cleaned area and then clean the snow from the rest of the ramp.

"We used both large snowblowers, two dump trucks and boss blades and a payload loader to move the snow from the ramp," said Doetker.

Doetker estimated they moved more than 300 dump truck loads of snow from the ramp. He said the crews had to contend with three different kinds of snow.

"We had the light powder, the blowing snow that packed, and packed snow from a previous storm," said Doetker. "Each type of snow moves differently, so when it piles up the way it did, it became quite a task to clear."



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

**Clearing A Path:** Master Sgt. Kevin Daehling, driving an OshKosh snowblower, cleans snow from West Furnas St. at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Jan. 13. Nebraska Air Guard civil engineers had to put in hours of extra time keeping the base's roads and flight line clear after Lincoln, Neb., received a record of more than 24 inches of snowfall in the month of December.



**Team Effort:** Members of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron pose on top of a 10-foot tall pile of snow that was moved from the Air National Guard aircraft ramp. The civil engineers were responsible for keeping the base streets, sidewalks and parking lots cleared of snow during the recent record snowfall.

Almost every member of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron pitched in to help move the snow. Some of the members received an hour of training on a piece of snow removal equipment and then were put to work.

"We used 18 different kinds of equipment, from the large snowblowers and plows, to walk behind snowblowers and many shovels," said Doetker.

blower kept blowing a seal, so they fired up a snowblower that was to be retired just to keep two of the large snowblowers clearing snow.

The snow removal operation was a complete team effort according to Doetker.

If a piece of equipment broke, vehicle maintenance employees would fix the equipment without asking any questions. The



**Pushing Snow:** Master Sgt. Sarah Bredthauer uses an OshKosh blade to push snow along West Furnas street at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Jan. 13. Bredthauer was pushing the snow into piles so a snowblower could clear the snow away.

vehicle maintenance supervisor also allowed the snow removal equipment to be stored inside so the hydraulics would stay warm, keeping the seals in good shape.

"I believe this was the main reason we didn't have equipment break down any more than we did," said Doetker.

The base populace also proved to be extremely understanding, said Doetker, adding that the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron work control center didn't receive many trouble calls, said Doetker.

They base populace knew the snow removal was the top priority, he added.

Unit members also cleaned the snow from around entry doors of the different buildings so that a tractor with a blade could come in and clean away the rest of the snow from around the buildings.

Units such as Aerospace Ground Equipment and Base Fuels also cleaned the snow from their respective areas so the civil engineers could concentrate on the other major areas of the base.

## HUMVEES continued from page 1.

ambulance has, Humvee ambulances have many advantages over their civilian counterpart when it comes to inclement weather.

"The main advantage that they have is they are four-wheel-drive," said Staff Sgt. Bryan Campbell, supply sergeant for 92nd Troop Command.

"They are not low profile, like the civilian ambulances...and since they are a Humvee they also have the power behind them to be able to go through bigger drifts."

Campbell was one of the first Soldiers to make it to the 110th MMB's headquarters at the Penterman Armory in Lincoln.

Arriving at approximately 7 p.m., he quickly prepared two Humvee ambulances, a Chevy Suburban and a back-up regular Humvee. Soon after, the first shift of ambulance drivers arrived at Penterman, were briefed on their mission and then sent to their respective fire stations - one to respond to emergencies north of O Street and the other to respond

south of O Street.

Sgt. Timothy Beckmann, property book office noncommissioned officer for the 110th MMB, was one driver who was able to make it in. Beckmann said he was enjoying his Christmas evening with a few family members at his house in Lincoln and was playing with his son when he was called to see if he could make it to work.

Beckmann said he and another driver were stationed at a fire station south of O Street and took turns responding to emergency calls throughout the night.

"We responded to every medical call," said Beckmann. "The Lincoln Fire and Rescue ambulance would get as close as they could and if at that time they decided that they could not go any farther we would be on our way. We would pick up the Lincoln Fire and Rescue paramedics in our ambulance and go to the scene."

"They coordinated a place to meet wherever that ambulance was... that's where we would meet

them and their paramedics would jump in the back of our ambulance and then we would go," he added.

Beckmann said he and his partner responded to 12 emergency calls from 9 p.m., Dec. 25, to 11 a.m., Dec. 26, with the Humvee ambulance.

He was very impressed with its capabilities.

"It gave me the chance to see exactly what the Humvee would do," he said. "There were some drifts we had to go through and to myself I was thinking 'I hope we make it,' but we had to go and it made it through."

Beckmann added there was only one time the Humvee ambulance needed to wait for a snowplow to get through a drift on the way to a call in Hickman, Neb.

Once Beckmann's shift ended there were additional ambulance drivers ready to take over and continue if Lincoln Fire and Rescue still needed them.

More impressive than the success of the mission was the attitude

shown by every Soldier involved.

"Nobody actually complained," said Campbell. "It is a holiday and most people have that day off and now you're asked to come in and work in blizzard-like conditions and the attitudes (were) not that of, 'I've gotten taken away from Christmas'...it was a 'Merry Christmas' with a smile on their face."

When he first received a phone call to show up for work, Beckmann said he was actually excited.

"My initial reaction was I was pumped up," he said. "I was ready to go, a little hesitant to tell my family what I was about to do, but they were very supportive."

Morgan said the 22 Soldiers who ended up sacrificing their holiday time to help in the operation should be proud.

"I think this is what you sign up for when you sign up in the Guard," said Morgan. "When we can give back to the community, I think that's really when we can be really proud."

"The Guard has the unique dual roles with state and federal

responsibilities, so I think for us to be able to respond at the state level in a timely manner like we did and serve our community, I think we had a lot of visibility," said Beckmann. "Working with the Lincoln Fire and Rescue, they have a lot of respect for what we do and we have a lot of respect for what they do. So to come together and for it to work as well as it did it was very rewarding."

Although Campbell said he was slightly envious of the drivers who actually got out and helped people while he manned the phones, he knows these types of operations are why many people sign up for the National Guard.

"A lot of the drivers felt very (grateful) that they were able to get out there and help," said Campbell. "That's kind of the reason we signed up to be in the Guard...not only can we serve our country, but better yet, we can serve our community here at home."

"Just to be able to get there and show people, 'Hey we're here, we do care,' it means a lot to us."