

# Illinois Sends Manpower, Equipment to California to Aid in Wildfire Response Efforts

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SPRINGFIELD – Gov. JB Pritzker announced today a CH-47F Chinook helicopter, six Illinois National Guard (ILNG) soldiers and the required mission equipment will deploy to California to assist with efforts to contain wildfires in northern California. These first responders hail from B Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 238<sup>th</sup> General Support Aviation based in Peoria. The team will be deployed to the Golden State for 14 days.

The CH-47F Chinook is a versatile, twin-engine, tandem rotor heavy-lift helicopter. The unit comes equipped with a Bambi Bucket which can hold 2,000 gallons of water for fire suppression missions. The team, which includes two pilots, two crew members to operate the Bambi Bucket and two maintenance personnel, will also provide operational assistance for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE).

The LNU Lightning Complex fire in northern California has charred more than 350,000 acres, destroyed nearly 1,000 structures, forced the evacuation of thousands and already claimed five lives. Rising temperatures could fuel this raging fire over the coming days and into the weekend.

“This spring, California Governor Gavin Newsom came to our state’s aid by loaning Illinois 100 ventilators in our time of need, and right now we have an opportunity to return the favor,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “California first responders are not only battling wildfires, they’re doing so in a COVID environment under the threat of severe heat and rolling blackouts. Our team of Illinois National Guard airmen will be coming in to provide additional manpower and equipment to help tackle this disaster. Our airmen are well-trained for these types of missions and will be a valuable resource for the Golden State.”

“This is a great example of how the Illinois National Guard can use its military capabilities to help others in need,” said Brig. Gen. Richard Neely, the Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard. “These Soldiers just returned from their annual training in Nevada where they practiced many of the high altitude and high temperature aviation skills they will now put to use in helping our fellow citizens in California. I couldn’t be more proud of these Soldiers and the families and employers that support them. This is what it means to be a member of the National Guard.”

The soldiers and helicopters from Co. B 2/238<sup>th</sup> Aviation previously deployed for rescue operations in 2018 during Hurricane Florence (North Carolina) and in 2011 to aid in Hurricane Sandy (Vermont) relief efforts.

Requests for assistance are coordinated through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), a mutual aid agreement that allows states to request assistance from other states during emergencies. Officials from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) have been in regular contact with their Californian counterparts and remain committed to meet additional needs of the state of California.

“In a period when states are stretched thin due in terms of personnel and resources due to extensive or repetitive disasters, EMAC becomes a vital tool to bolster manpower, expertise and various other resources needed for disaster response,” said IEMA Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau. “EMAC allows states to help other states be safe, secure and

resilient against all hazards. That partnership and collaboration is more important now than ever before.”

The ILNG unit will depart Saturday from Peoria Air Wing after receiving event identification, mission and safety briefings and mobilization assistance. This process ensures the accountability and readiness of personnel and state assets prior to departure. All costs associated with these deployments will be paid for by California.