



**GUARDOME**

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# Letter from The Adjutant General

*"We provide well-trained, equipped and ready military units of Maine citizen-soldiers and Airmen for the defense of the state and nation; we prepare for, respond to, recover from, and help to mitigate the effects of natural and man-made disasters to the citizens of our state, and we ensure that our military veterans and their families are cared for from the time they leave the service and forever,"*

*-Brig. Gen. James Campbell, March 2013*



By the time this issue of our magazine is published, our Maine National Guard will have just completed Exercise Vigilant Guard 2014, the largest and most complex regional civil-military domestic response exercise in our history.

This exercise has involved over 3500 participants from across New England and elsewhere in the United States and Canada, representing both civil agencies and the military. It has been a monumental undertaking to plan, coordinate and resource. My sincere thanks go to our superb joint military planning team and to our close partners at the Maine Emergency Management Agency who have led this major and historic effort.

Exercises like Vigilant Guard highlight what is best about the National Guard – our unique ability to integrate our proven military capabilities with our civilian interagency partners, and provide support to our citizens when they need it most.

I am confident that after this vast and important undertaking, our units, our Joint Staff and our leadership are better prepared and even more capable than we have ever been of performing our vital domestic role. Our challenge now is to internalize the lessons of this important training event, swiftly address our shortcomings and reinforce our strengths, and get on with the business of being the premier National Guard organization in the country.

This coming training year is again full of opportunities to improve our units and Soldiers, and we will do this as we do everything – with quiet, competent professionalism and a focus on setting and achieving high standards.

The Maine National Guard, by conducting this historic exercise, has proven yet gain that we consistently lead the way with our professional excellence, work ethic, and willingness to take on the tough missions and win.

Bayonets, Forward!  
Brig. Gen. James Campbell

# From the Command Sgt. Major



Soldiers,

The Maine Army National Guard strives for highly trained, well developed noncommissioned officers to train and educate our junior soldiers. Going forward, we are taking a more proactive approach towards evaluating the requirements for promotion.

Effective 1 January 2014, any Maine Army National Guard staff sergeant who does not graduate the Warrior Leader Course by 30 September 2014, will be reduced to the rank of sergeant for failure to complete their primary military education.

Selection for promotion to an NCO rank is based on performance and potential to serve at increasing levels of responsibilities. The training and education of our NCOs is vital to our readiness. The Army developed this program to bridge the operational and institutional domains and set conditions for continuous growth and life-long learning for soldiers. Due to the funding constraints of today's environment, SSD is an intricate part of our training and is here to stay.

SSD is mandatory, web-based training that continues throughout a soldier's career and is synchronized with classroom and experiential learning. The multimedia courses cover everything from NCO history to recognizing the signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, implementing habits to increase health and fitness to applying ethical leadership at a small unit level.

SSD is a centrally managed set of specified contents that must be completed within specified career points as a prerequisite for attendance at Warrior Leader Course, Senior Leader Course and Sergeants Major Course. Continual training and education is a vital part in our career and as a leader in a rapidly changing environment. Any soldier who cannot meet the core requirements that the Army demands will not be given the opportunity to advance. This includes soldiers who fail to complete their level of SSD, during the prescribed timeframes will not be eligible for promotion consideration or further NCOES attendance.

I urge you to challenge yourself. As a soldier and vital part of the success of the Maine Army National Guard we cannot allow ourselves become complacent. It is your responsibility as a soldier to be committed to maintaining your military professionalism which begins with education.

Bayonets, Forward!  
RICHARD L. HANNIBAL  
State Command Sergeant Major

## 133rd Engineering Battalion Formally Starts Mission in Afghanistan

Story Courtesy Asset, Photos by 1st Lt. Jonathan Bratten



On October 16, Maine's 133rd Engineer Battalion conducted a Transfer of Authority ceremony with the 864th Engineer Battalion from Washington, marking the beginning of the next phase of the CENTCOM Materiel Recovery Element mission, as the U.S. works to hand over security to Afghan forces.

When the 864 arrived in Afghanistan they began the CMRE mission from scratch. By the time they transferred authority to the 133rd, they had successfully closed or retrograded over eight bases.

The Forward Detachment of the 133rd includes nearly 200 soldiers that support Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Forward Support Company, and the 1035 Survey and Design Detachment. Along with other units that came together for the mission, they conducted their pre-mobilization at Camp Shelby, Miss., before heading to Afghanistan.

The history of the 133rd includes battles or mobilizations from the War of 1812, the Civil War, World War I, World War II and Operation Iraqi Freedom. At the transfer-of-authority ceremony last month, Lt. Col. Dean Preston, the 133rd Battalion's commander, discussed the strength of the National Guard, noting that people from all walks of life and professions were represented in the battalion's ranks, and he said, "Chamberlain's Battalion has been one of the best in the Army for some time and I expect this version to continue the tradition. There will not be a down tick from what the 864th has started. The 133rd will carry this mantle through the next finish line. Task Force Black Bear will 'Push Through.'"

# Honored By Those We Serve

1st Lt. Jonathan Bratten

This is a hard post to write, as Veterans Day is such a meaningful day for all those in uniform. I will try to do it justice, knowing that we all have those we remember who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Veterans Day has become difficult sort of "holiday" for current members of the armed services, and I am no exception.

While we appreciate that the country takes a day off to remember the sacrifices our comrades in arms, we also remember our comrades who didn't come home and feel as though that could be better remembered than a national day off. Thus every November, we take part in whatever ceremonies or parades we choose to, always with that feeling that civilians are not exactly keeping the same holiday that we are.

Such were my feelings when taking part in the Portland, Maine, Veterans Day Parade. Portland, for those who don't know, is kind of a "granola" town.

One always has the feeling of being out of place when in uniform, for no particular

reason. Hence my feeling of unease prior to the parade and ceremonies. I am used to the Midwest, where if you're in uniform, you don't pay for anything. And men point you out to their sons as role models. As you're pumping gas. Add this to my already mixed feelings about Veterans Day and you have the confused cocktail of thoughts that was my morning.

It was a slightly chilly morning, and I only expected about a hundred or so people at the parade.

And now I must apologize to Portland, and New England, for doubting its quiet, solid, patriotism. For all along the mile-long route, hundreds of citizens observed our march.

Old men, remembering a different time, with different faces, but all the same spirit; young women telling their children what this day meant; families who smiled and called out their thanks; and more, who just simply spoke with their presence, or held a sign showing gratitude.

Swallowing my pride (and a tear), I

admitted that I had done the American public wrong.

***We were all at one time civilians too, so in a very real sense, we draw our strength from them. We draw our strength from our families, some who may have never worn the uniform but still hurt with the rest of us.***

Our spouses feel our pain more sharply than even we do at times, making them a special sort of veteran.

So, in the end, I guess what I'm trying to say is that when we sometimes retreat behind the uniform to silently grieve, remember, or celebrate, we need to remember that civilians share the same emotions; not for comrades, but for husbands, wives, sons, and daughters. This Veterans Day, I was reminded why we serve.

# Veterans Day

# Maine Military Honors Performs 10,000th Funeral

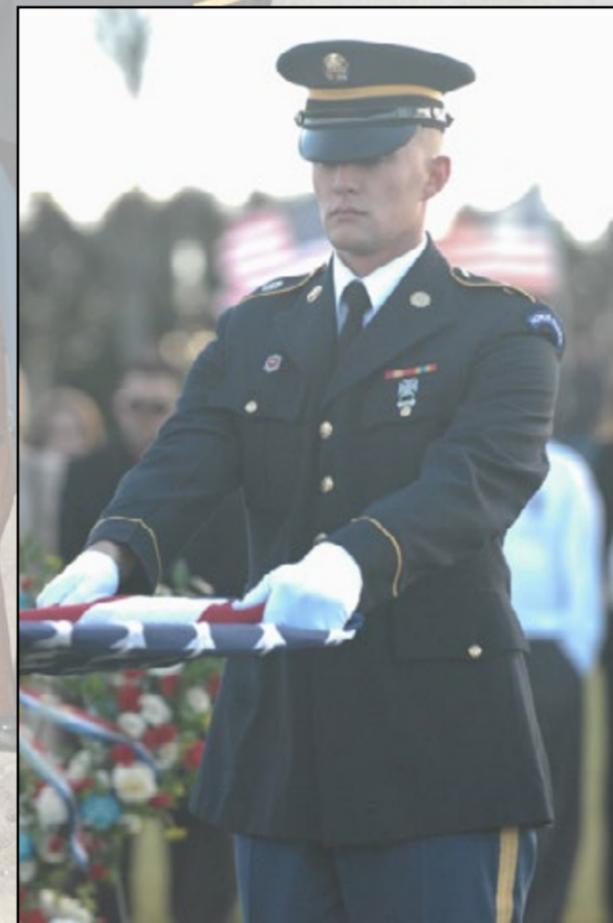
The Maine Army National Guard Military Funeral Honors Program performed the 10,000th ceremony on October 6th, 2013 in Troy, Maine.

According to the Veterans Administration, Maine loses between 3,800 and 4,000 veterans per year...one-third being U.S. Army veterans. The Maine Military Funeral Honors Program performs 100 percent of the military funerals for state veterans, the highest per capita performance level in the U.S.

The Maine Military Funeral Honors Program has grown tremendously. They went from performing an average 35 services per month in 2004 to performing an average of 112 services per month in 2013. Currently, they have performed services and ceremonies for 92 consecutive weekends.

Last fiscal year, the Army National Guard (nationwide) performed 86 percent of the total U.S. Army Military Funeral Honors mission. The Army National Guard performed just over 22,000 ceremonies in 2002. This year they performed 131,000 military funerals and supported nearly 2,500 other services.

Maine Military Funeral Honors Program team members are of the highest caliber and represent units throughout the state. They perform services for the veterans of Maine to the same standard as those veterans being honored at Arlington National Cemetery. From soldiers killed in action to veterans with no next of kin to receive the folded flag, the members of the Army National Guard Honor Guard perform to the absolute highest standard.



# Maine Servicemembers Honor Fallen Heros During Maine Marathon

Story by Sgt. Angela Parady

Photos Courtesy of Kyra Darling and Rachel Bosse.

On a crisp fall Sunday, over two dozen Maine National Guardsmen met before sunrise at the Portland Armory on Stephens Ave. They pinned on their race numbers, "86," picked up their rucksacks, and headed to the starting point for the Maine Marathon.

Fighting off blisters, sore muscles and exhaustion, the servicemembers took on the 26-mile journey of the Portland marathon while toting more than 30 pounds in their rucksacks. With photographs, buttons, and memories of their fallen brothers and sisters, they walked, keeping the memories of these heroes alive.

Eight years ago, Maj. Grant Delaware, executive officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 286th Combat Sustainment Battalion in Bangor, contacted the race director for the Maine Marathon about a tribute march that would coincide with the marathon. Since then, the event has become a staple with soldiers participating every year, regardless of deployments, work and training schedules, and even, a government shutdown.

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy MacArthur, communications

team chief for the 11th Weapons of Mass Destruction, Civil Support Team in Waterville, has participated in every march since 2006. In the last few years he has taken on the role of coordinator, planner, marcher, and pace keeper. Looking back at previous marches, he finds one point in the march always remains the most challenging.



"The last two miles are the hardest of the entire 26," he said. "One, it is very slow, so at that point it hurts. But we stay that slow pace because for those last miles, we have everyone. We have grandparents, we have children, and everyone comes together then. Every year, it is very emotional, when everyone is together, and

when we cross the finish line, it hits me. Every time." Many of the servicemembers who come out do so year after year. Connections have formed with the family members who join those last two miles. As the family members are welcomed into the formation, they often fall in beside soldiers they have come to know. They share \

hugs, stories, and memories as they walk. A soldier at the front and back of the formation help hold a steady pace so that no one is left behind.

When they started the tribute march, the number of fallen was seven. This year, 86 servicemembers, all with connections to Maine, were

honored.

MacArthur, who has been active in the military for 13 years, said this is something he looks forward to every year.

"I do it every year. I enjoy the challenge, the physical aspect of it," he said. "But mostly, I do it to let those family members know they are still a part of the organization. We can't just let them fall by wayside because their servicemember isn't here anymore. We need to continue to bring them in and include them because the Maine National Guard, we are all about family. You form those bonds. I do it every year for the families, to let them know we haven't forgotten."

Peggy Dostie, of Sommerville is the mother of fallen soldier Spc. Tommie Dostie. Tommie was one of two Maine Guardsmen killed in killed in an explosion at Forward Operating Base Marez near Mosul, Iraq on December 21st, 2004. Staff Sgt. Lynn Robert Poulin was the other soldier. She and her husband have only missed one of the marches since they began. Dostie said that events like the tribute march and the Run for the Fallen that bring together current servicemembers and families

of the fallen, are a chance for her to reconnect with that part of her son's life.

***"We appreciate everything that these soldiers are doing. Whether its serving overseas, or serving here. This march not only honors our son, but also the sons and daughters of so many other families, and it's a good feeling knowing that they are still being remembered."***

For the servicemembers, the 26 mile ruck is not an easy event. Foot powder, band aids, and a fresh dry pair of socks quickly become necessities. But while their torn and sore feet will heal, the painful memories of their fallen friends still linger.

MacArthur said "the hardest part as a participant is probably a tie between picking up that rucksack and putting it back on at the rest halt each time, with those sore feet and just getting back out there and continuing to walk, and then the recovery process after.

People's backs, shoulders and feet get torn up, and it takes some time to recover. The blisters and pain that you feel for the week or two after the event, though, that pales in comparison to what these family members deal with on a daily basis. For two weeks of pain, I can endure and I can put that rucksack back on, and I can keep on walking, for them. These guys would rather be here doing this, then where they are right now."

This year, Dostie's granddaughter walked the entire last two miles. She is six, and has never met the uncle she marches for, but she has been doing it every year. Her family is proud to share the memories of "Uncle Tom" with these nieces and nephews he won't ever meet.

"It means everything to us that Tom will never be forgotten," said Dostie. "There are people out there all the time who are remembering us. Books, news shows, it all means so much. These soldiers will never be forgotten. People are doing so much to keep those memories going. And you can't really put it into words how much it means to us, but it means everything. I am sure other families feel the same way- that their sacrifice was not for nothing."





## Maine Aviators Conduct Operation Timberhook

Photo and Story by Adam Simmler

On November 2, Soldiers of the Maine Army National Guard's Company C, 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment spent the day in Northern Maine, working alongside Maine Park Rangers and representatives from Baxter State Park to airlift building supplies and raw materials to camping sites throughout the park.

The mission, dubbed "Operation Timberhook" involved moving materials such as cedar logs, firewood, propane tanks, and sand, to remote locations around the park for use in the renovation of old camping lean-tos around the park, and the construction of new ones near Wassataquik Lake.

The unit, which specializes in medical evacuation, traded their first aid stretchers for cargo sling kits to lend a hand to park staff, and in turn, the visitors that come to the park every year.

***"Without the National Guard's help, this project would take all winter, inevitably things would get broken and people would get hurt,"***

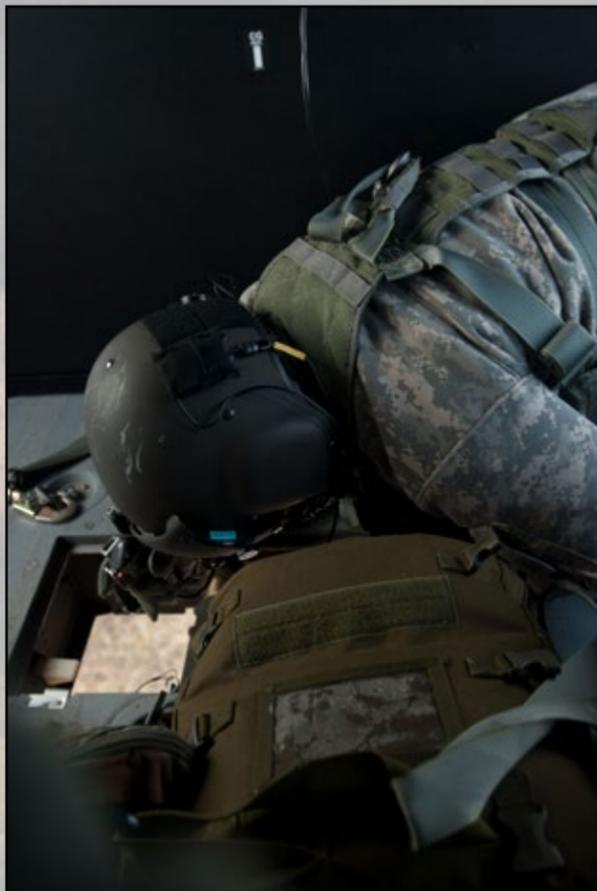
said Stewart Guay, deputy chief ranger at Baxter State Park. "We're able to provide them some awesome and challenging terrain in which to train, so it's mutually beneficial."

A lot of people don't know that the Maine National Guard has an Aviation element, so it's nice to get the word out about what we do, said Spc. Philip Kramer, a Crew Chief from 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment.

According to Stewart Guay, The partnership between the crews and helicopters of the Maine National Guard and Baxter State Park goes back for decades. Working together in life, limb, and eyesight medical emergencies as well as missions like Operation Timberhook.

During the day, the crew of aircraft 668 took a break from carrying supplies to train with park rangers on loading injured park visitors into the UH-60 for medical evacuation. Which is just one of the many services the unit provides to the local community.

Guay concluded, we take our relationship with the Guard very seriously and we hope to keep it going, it's truly outstanding.





# Maine's Developing State Partnership Program

Story and Photos by Sgt. Angela Parady

The United States Army National Guard history can be traced to Dec. 13 1636 when the Massachusetts General Court declared that all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60 were required to join the militia. Thousands of miles and centuries later on June 3 2006 Montenegro declared independence from Serbia, making it the world's youngest country at the time.

Six months later, on Dec. 7, the oldest military institution in America, the National Guard, became formally associated with the youngest country. Military leadership from Maine and Montenegro met on Dec. 10 to review their progress over the last six years and discuss the future of their partnership.

Since 2006, Montenegro has made significant improvements to their overall military doctrine, officer and non commissioned officer development programs, training plans and equipment. They have

improved their emergency management programs, and bettered their posture towards becoming a NATO member, and gaining entry to the European Union.

In order to establish partnerships with both the United States and the European Union, one of the first steps the government of Montenegro took after gaining independence was to take part in the National Guard State Partnership Program. The program aligns states with nations around the world to assist those nations in both civilian and military matters. Maine submitted their application and paired with Montenegro in 2006 to help advise the newly formed country as it began to develop its institutions.

During the last six years, the state partners have accomplished a great deal. Montenegrin Army Lt. Col. Ilija Dakovic said that through different joint activities, the State Partnership Program has helped improve the Montenegrin military

capabilities and significantly improve the overall preparedness of the state to respond in natural emergencies.

which resembles Maine in landscape, in December 2012.

Campbell said it is

continue to develop their relationship. Together they review training and how they are improving the Montenegrins posture for

membership, Campbell has some additional objectives he is planning to meet in the next year to provide invaluable training to Maine Guardsmen and Airmen.

"The great thing about this program is it is a two-way street," he said. "They train in Maine, and we can train here. One of my goals is to be able to have soldiers and airmen from Maine National Guard work with foreign military, in an area that is outside the norm. Have them doing things like working with interpreters, with a military that has different traditions than ours, because in my eyes, that is the new normal. We no longer fight wars as a single, separate country, and I don't see that changing."

Capt. Christopher Elgee, director of the SPP in Maine agreed on the importance of this program to the National Guard.

"The benefit for the Maine soldier, the Maine airman, is hard to quantify. International exposure is



Army Brig. Gen. James Campbell, the new adjutant general for the state of Maine, made his first formal visit to the country,

customary that the adjutant general visit at least once a year and reach out to the Montenegrin military and civilian leadership to

NATO membership.

Besides the ultimate objective of helping Montenegro achieve NATO

absolutely imperative to anyone who is going to fight in wars today. Our soldiers are preparing to fight in other nations, we don't go as just the United States, and we go as coalition forces. So this exposure with a foreign military is a wonderful experience for Maine soldiers."

Campbell sees the SPP as a huge advantage for all states that participate in it. Soldiers are able to gain the experience of working with multinational soldiers, customs, and equipment variances all while working towards a common goal, without having to be in a deployed environment first.

"The SPP is the only way we have right now of building these bilateral exchanges without going on combat deployments," said Campbell. "Personally, I would rather have our soldiers and airmen working through this to gain that experience, rather than sending them into harm's way."

For the Montenegrins, their primary objective is to achieve NATO membership. Elgee, who lives in Gray, Maine said that working with the United States helps them develop the model that NATO looks for.

"In a lot of ways we are the NATO standard bearers," said Elgee. "So when they are trying to become the next nation in NATO, we bring them that experience and knowledge."

Campbell met with Milica Pejanovic-Djurisic, Montenegrin minister of defense during his visit. According to Dakovic, who serves as the head of development department for the Armed Forces of Montenegro, their military has made great progress since being teamed with Maine. They have learned about family support programs and psychological preparation for multinational operations.

"Their nuclear, biological and chemical unit has been

improved through a series of joint activities," said Dakovic. "Furthermore, by performing activities in Maine and Montenegro, we have improved our soldiers ability to operate in extreme climate conditions, while building on our partnership."

Together, the minister of defense and general specified the next goals for the SPP to work on. Montenegro is very focused on developing training programs for troops deploying to Afghanistan, gaining more experience in civil-military cooperation, especially in emergency management disaster preparedness, and completing more joint

training missions.

As the relationship between Maine and Montenegro matures, Campbell hopes the partnership helps the state of Maine develop better service members while also helping the Montenegrins grow and develop their programs.

Since his 2012 visit, Maine has sent a group of ROTC cadets and instructors to train with the Montenegrins, and they have visited here, most recently, taking part in one of the largest training exercises in the country, Vigilant Guard.

"I hope we can continue this into the foreseeable future," said Campbell.

"This is a great program, not only for Maine, but for all the states and territories that participate in this program. There are over 60 state partnership programs. It's a great added value for the military to allow the National Guard to do this because it allows the active duty military to do some other things. It increases the strength of the National Guard to be able to do these things at all levels. I think that the skill sets and ability developed, the leader engagement are important to the National Guard. I think that by broadening this program we will continue to develop those skills and continue to be a valuable asset into the future."





# Montenegro: Country Profile



Montenegro emerged as a sovereign state after just over 55% of the population opted for independence in a May 2006 referendum. The vote heralded the end of the former Union of Serbia and Montenegro - itself created only three years earlier out of the remnant of the former Yugoslavia. The EU-brokered deal forming it was intended to stabilize the region by settling Montenegrin demands for independence from Serbia and preventing further changes to Balkan borders.

The same deal also contained the seeds of the union's dissolution. It stipulated that after three years the two republics could hold referendums on whether to keep or scrap it. Montenegro opted for the latter. Montenegro last experienced independence nearly 90 years earlier. It was absorbed into the newly-formed Yugoslavia at the end of World War I.

There were fears that the 2006 independence vote could lead to unrest in the areas of Montenegro where ethnic Serbs, who make up roughly a third of the population, formed the majority and strongly

opposed separation from Serbia. There was backing for independence from most ethnic Montenegrins and ethnic Albanians living in Montenegro.

The pro-independence camp led by Prime Minister Djukanovic argued that the association with Serbia was holding the republic back, not least with its bid for EU membership.

As the successor state to the union, Serbia inherited its seat at the UN and other international organizations. The newly-independent Montenegro has since been admitted to the UN in its own right.

The country officially applied to join the EU on 15 December 2008. Striving for EU membership Another important milestone on Montenegro's path to EU membership was reached towards the end of 2009, when Montenegrin citizens were granted the right to visa-free travel within the Schengen zone. Formal EU accession talks began in June 2012.

Only a few months earlier, Montenegro had taken another major step forward in full membership of the

international community when it became a member of the World Trade Organization in April 2012. It had applied for WTO membership in December 2004.

Montenegro, which means "Black Mountain", borders Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Serbia's breakaway province of Kosovo and Albania. About half of it is covered in thick forest. The tiny republic encompasses an Adriatic coastline, lowlands and high mountain ranges. The Tara River canyon is the deepest and longest in Europe.

## Facts

- Full name: Republic of Montenegro
- Population: 633,000 (UN 2012)
- Administrative capital: Podgorica
- Area: 13,812 sq km (5,333 sq miles)
- Main religions: Christianity, Islam
- Languages: Serbian, Montenegrin
- Life expectancy: 73 years (men), 77 years (women) (UN)
- Monetary unit: euro
- Main export: Aluminium
- GNI per capita: \$7,140 (World Bank 2011)

# First Responders Put to the Test During Vigilant Guard Exercise in Maine

Story and Photos by Sgt. Angela Parady

A major winter ice storm bringing nearly three feet of snow and frigid temperatures leaves hundreds of thousands without power. An ice arena collapses with an unknown number of people inside; later that night there is a suspected terrorist attack at a major government facility. A suspected anthrax lab has been reported, and hazardous material has leaked on a ship coming into Portland International Marina.

This culmination of events was only an exercise to test the preparedness of emergency management systems in Maine, but it could happen. To be better prepared, emergency aid agencies and National Guard soldiers from seven states, and first responders participated in a Vigilant Guard exercise in Maine Nov. 5-8.

Every year, NGB and the U.S. Northern Command pick four locations to host the exercise. Each location is in a different FEMA region, so the likelihood of a state being able to host the event more than once is rare. The goal of the program is to enhance both National Guard and state emergency preparedness.

All of the participants work together to assess storm damage, identify hazmat threats, decontamination, search and rescue, patient extraction, triage, and other emergency-response measures. Working side by side and being able to recognize one another helps develop relationships before they are in the emergency situation.

Lt. Col. Diane Dunn, a Maine Army National Guard soldier who works for Joint Force Headquarters said that the exercise has met every goal they set out to accomplish, primarily networking and developing resources.

***"Every single time you get military partners working side by side with civilians they establish relationships, and that is probably the most important thing," said Dunn.***

"Understanding who the leaders are, and what tasks belong to whom, so when you have to support someone, you already know their strengths

and weaknesses and where you fit into that picture. Those experiences make this exercise more valuable."

During the last 13 months, Dunn has worked very closely with Maine Emergency Management Agency Exercise Officer, Jeremy Damren. They worked directly with NGB and NORTHCOMM to plan the event. He agreed that communication is essential to developing working relationships.

"Many of our responders here would be the same people responding to our neighboring states as well," said Damren.

"So now, we recognize these faces and can hopefully work a bit closer than had we just shown up. I think anytime you exchange business cards before an emergency its always better than doing it during the emergency."

Although Maine has not had anything to this scale happen yet, it could happen. Emergency situations in New England, such as Hurricane Irene, or Hurricane Sandy that required a multistate response, have already happened, and this just helps train everyone to be better equipped.

Dunn, a native of Newburgh, said this training is the opportunity of a lifetime for the National Guard.

"It gives us the opportunity to not only understand the resources and capabilities the civilians have, but also our role," she said. "How we support our civilians, and where we would fit into our communities and to make sure our families and our community members are safe. Most importantly, that can help response efforts like this."

When a disaster strikes, trained, local emergency personnel respond first. When the first responders have expended their resources, the county comes in to assist. In a situation like Vigilant Guard, with multiple competing priorities, whether it is sheltering people, clearing roads, or just public safety in general, sometimes they too run out of resources.

That's when MEMA, enters the picture. They have a designated planning staff that is responsible for responding to emergencies. They can look at all the resources state wide and see where things can be shared. After the state



exceeds all of their resources, they request National Guard assistance, and mutual aid partners in neighboring states, and federal agencies. The military doesn't step in and take over the situation. They are there to help aid and assist the first responders and other agencies already in place, said Damren, who lives in Belgrade.

"The Adjutant General, who manages both us and the Maine National Guard, has said from the very beginning, that all disasters start local. So this military takeover would never happen. What would happen is we would work together."

Working side by side, military and civilian responders extract, decontaminate and treat the victims at the

collapsed building. Meanwhile, other crews have been called in to respond to nearly 20 other emergency events throughout the state, from cybersecurity breaches, to a contaminated ship coming into Portland. It took nearly 1500 National Guard soldiers, hundreds of civilian medical and first responders and international partners working together to help mitigate the disaster.

Because events this extreme are not common in New England, this was an opportunity to demonstrate the National Guard and civilian agencies abilities to respond when called, and to train military soldiers for their response, said Dunn.

"It gave us the opportunity to exercise our main job;

to defend our state and to respond in time of crisis," she continued.

"It is not something we do all the time, so its important that we dust off those plans and are familiar with what our tasks are and how we need to continue to train and prepare so we can meet the call when it comes in."

Similarly, Damren was very happy with the overall exercise.

"Being able to strengthen the military and civilian relationship and reflect that we do all work together," he said.

"It doesn't matter what uniform you wear, we are all here to do a job, so let's just get to work, make people safe, and save lives."





# ***Vigilant Guard 2014***

Photos by Sgt. Angela Parady and  
Spc. Adam Simmler



# Interval Training- Building Speed

If you want to improve your score on run portion of the PT test, or just be able to run faster in general, interval training is currently the best proven method to do so.

The most preferred method of determining interval workout components includes: Distance, Run and Rest Interval, Repetitions, and Time. Each of these components of interval training effect the other as noted below.

I do not use a general calculating formula but a more specific running approach, since we all are different types of runners. How do you get to be a better runner so you can drop minutes off your run time?

Follow the steps outlined below and you will have an idea of how to integrate interval training into your regime:

- 1) Time yourself in your PFT run.
- 2) Determine a reasonable goal for your PFT run.
- 3) Find your GOAL time for the PFT run. Divide your goal to figure out the mile pace
- 4) Divide your mile goal pace into 1/8-mile, 1/4-mile, 1/2-mile distances

The following distances are great for any of the military PFT run interval training and the times listed below will help a sample runner decrease his run time from a 7:00 to a 6:00 mile.

For instance:

1/2-mile times should be run in 3:00 - 1/4-mile times should be run 90 seconds, and - 1/8-mile times should be run 45 seconds,

It is recommended to either walk or slowly jog as a recovery method in between the timed runs above. The interval of rest depends on your fitness level. Walk to rest if you are a beginner or average runner and jog to catch your breath if you are more advanced. Usually the walking distance is equal to or 1/2 the distance you just ran.

So, if you ran a 3:00 1/2-mile, walk or slow jog a 1/4-mile. NOW you know your pace at each distance...time for the workout! Putting all the components of interval training together creates a challenging workout that will help you decrease your run time:

- Repeat 3-4 times - Run 1/2-mile at goal pace - Walk or jog 1/4-mile
- Repeat 4-6 times - Run 1/4-mile at goal pace - Walk or jog 1/8 of a mile
- Repeat 4-6 times - Run 1/8-mile at goal pace - Walk or jog 100 yds

Do this workout two times a week combined with two longer runs of three to five miles during the week. In a few weeks, you will see your running pace increase and your mile times begin to drop while making your pace easier to maintain. Here are a few more tips to help you pick up your pace and stay injury free:

1) Breathing - Take big, deep inhalations and exhalations similar to the way you yawn. This

will help you receive the oxygen your body needs. Slow down the running pace if you need to, but concentrate on your breathing.

2) Stride and Heel / Toe Contact - Open your stride to a point where you will land on your heel and roll across your foot, pushing off the ground with your toes. You can eliminate this by following the simple Audio Test. If you can hear your feet hitting the ground when you run, then you are running wrong. It should sound like your shoes are rolling on the ground quietly. Comfortable running shoes will also aid in prevention of injuries.

3) Arm Swing - You should have a relaxed arm swing but very pronounced. Swing your hands from about chest high to just past your hips in a straight line. The term "hip to lip" is a good way to remember this when you are running. Your arms should be slightly bent but not flexed.

4) Relaxed Upper body - You should relax your fists, arms, shoulders, and face. This causes the oxygenated blood that you need to go to your legs to also go to your upper body. The only things that need to be working when you are running are your "lungs and your legs."

5) Start slowly and warm up - Do not stretch your legs until you have warmed up your body by jogging or biking slowly for about 5-10 minutes. Run every other day if you are just beginning and only add mileage to your run as you feel comfortable.

# Facing Domestic Violence

Does this shock you?

In 2012, the Maine Domestic Violence Resource Centers had 132,105 client contacts.

October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month. To raise your awareness of the complexities for a victim, I simply ask that you read over the example safety plan below and imagine if you had to worry about all these things - for years or even decades - living in constant fear.

Step 1. Safety during a violent episode

a.If I decide to leave, I will go to \_\_\_\_\_.

b.I can keep a bag ready and put it \_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.

c.The bag should have these things in it: \_\_\_\_\_

d.I can tell \_\_\_\_\_

about the violence and have him or her call the police when violence erupts.

e.I can teach my children to call 9-1-1.

f.I will use the code word \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to alert my children, friends, and family to call for help.

g.When an argument erupts, I will move to a safer room such as \_\_\_\_\_

h.I can teach these strategies to my children: \_\_\_\_\_

i.I will use my instincts, intuition,

and judgment. I will protect myself and my children until we are out of danger.

Step 2. Safety when getting ready to leave a.I'll leave money, important documents, and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_.

b.I'll open a savings account in my own name by this date \_\_\_\_\_.

c.Other things I can do to increase my independence are \_\_\_\_\_.

d.I'll memorize the domestic violence helpline \_\_\_\_\_.

e.I'll memorize the number I need to use to request emergency shelter \_\_\_\_\_.

f.I'll use a prepaid cell phone, a friend's phone, a prepaid phone card and someone else's phone (relative, work, or school), or I'll call collect, so my batterer can't trace my calls from the cell phone bill.

g.I'll make sure I can leave extra clothes at the safety home I can go to, the home of \_\_\_\_\_

or \_\_\_\_\_.

h.I can borrow money from \_\_\_\_\_.

i.I'll review my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ days/weeks.

j.I'll use this route to get out of my house or apartment and to my safety house: \_\_\_\_\_

k.I'll review this plan with \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (a friend, counselor, or advocate).

l.I'll rehearse my escape plan and practice it with my children.

Step 3. Safety at home (if you no longer live with your partner) As soon as possible, I will...

a.Change the locks on my doors and windows.

b.Replace wooden doors with steel doors.

c.Have security systems installed: additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, electronic sensors.

d.Purchase rope ladders, so we can escape from the second floor.

e.Install smoke detectors and buy fire extinguishers for each floor of my home.

f.Have an outside lighting system installed that lights up when someone approaches my home.

g.Teach my children how to use the phone to make collect calls to me and to \_\_\_\_\_ (friend, family, minister) if my partner tries to take them.

h.Tell the people who care for my children or who have permission to pick up my children that my partner is NOT allowed to. I will inform these people:

School \_\_\_\_\_

Day Care \_\_\_\_\_

Babysitter \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday School \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

And \_\_\_\_\_

Others \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ i.Tell these people that my partner no longer lives with me and that they should call the police if they see my partner near my residence: Neighbors \_\_\_\_\_

Church Leaders \_\_\_\_\_

Friends \_\_\_\_\_

Others \_\_\_\_\_

Step 4. Drug and alcohol use. I can stay safer around drugs and alcohol if:

a.I use them in a safe place with people who understand the risk of violence and who are committed to my safety.

b.I \_\_\_\_\_ when my partner is using.

c.I \_\_\_\_\_ in order to protect my children.

Step 5. Safety and my emotional health. If or when...

a. I feel depressed and ready to return to a potentially violent situation/partner, I can \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, and I can call \_\_\_\_\_.

b.I have to talk to my partner in person or on the phone, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

c.I need to be assertive, I will use "I can" statements.

d. I feel people are trying to control or abuse me, I can tell myself " \_\_\_\_\_".

e.I need support, I can call the following people: \_\_\_\_\_.

f.I need to feel stronger, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

And these days victims also have to consider ever evolving technology concerns - devices that track their car's location and/or record conversations from inside the car, programs that hack and remotely report their phone and computer activity, including texts and email. Some programs can even be set up so every time a victim receives or makes a cell phone call the abuser's phone rings to listen in. Even looking up domestic violence resources and contact numbers can be dangerous for some victims.

MAINE COALITION TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: <http://mcedv.org/>

24-hour Hotlines  
From Area code (207) call 1-866-834-HELP National hotline: 1-800-799-7233 Use 911 for emergency situations

CPT Jasmine A. Cain  
Maine National Guard  
Sexual Assault Response  
Coordinator  
Suicide Prevention Program  
Manager  
Domestic Abuse Program Manager  
Office: (207) 430-5824  
BlackBerry: (207) 620-6335  
Cell: (207) 944-4017  
24hr DoD Safe Helpline: 877-995-5247

# How to Avoid Holiday Weight Gain

It seems to happen every holiday season.

You attend parties and office gatherings to share a few festive moments with family, friends, colleagues and lots and lots of food. But when the holiday season is finally over, the bathroom scale reveals that you've gained some weight again, much to your chagrin.

Research studies show most adults gain some weight over the holidays. But don't despair because this year can be different.

How can you try to maintain your weight and heart-health during such a tempting time? Here are tips to surviving the holiday hoop-la that is sure-fire success – this season and in the future ones to come.

## 1. Get moving

One of the most effective ways to maintain or lose body weight is to engage in regular, sustained aerobic activity. To burn off those extra calories, kick up your exercise. If you exercise for 30 minutes a day, increase it to 45 minutes. If you exercise three times a week, move it up to five times a week.

Exercise is a great way to burn those extra calories you may be taking in this time of year (remember those iced reindeer cookies you had with lunch?). Here are some ideas to get you moving:

\*If you have a stationery bicycle or treadmill at home, dust it off and put it in front of the television or radio for some background entertainment while you're exercising. Why not watch your favorite television show and exercise at the same time?

\*Go to the library and get a book on tape or CD, listen to it and read (so-to-speak) as you exercise.

\*Haven't used your gym-pass in awhile? Hire a personal trainer to teach you effective calorie-burning techniques, or join that kick boxing class you've always wanted to try.

\*Go for a morning or evening walk alone or with a friend.

\*Put a little kick in your cleaning technique. Fire up some music and dance while you clean. Who ever knew cleaning could be so fun?

## 2. Aim for seven-a-day

Making sure you eat seven or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day is a great way to help fill-up your stomach but not your calorie level. When compared to other snack foods like chips, crackers and cookies, gram for gram, fruits and vegetables contain fewer calories and tons more nutrients. What's more – the fiber in fruits and vegetables fill you up faster than traditional snack foods. Pack your refrigerator with bags of cut-up vegetables and whole or cut-up fruits. Grab a bag while on the go or at work. Make a pact with yourself that you'll eat your five-a-day before you snack on any cookies or other holiday treats. You're sure to take in fewer calories overall.

## 3. Control the risk for temptation

Controlling even the slightest chance of coming in contact with 'tempting' foods is one way to effectively reduce your intake. While you won't be able to control all situations, focus on the ones you can. For example, do you keep candy or cookies at your desk or workspace? Make a mental note of tempting places and try to control them. Mentally plan out how you will avoid

tempting situations.

## 4. Limit to one-a-day

While you can't control every situation, you can control how much food goes into your mouth. If you are constantly bombarded with holiday parties and displays of desserts or candies you can still effectively help prevent overeating and weight gain. One way is the one-a-day method. Allow yourself one small serving of a cookie or piece of candy each day during the holiday season. Remember that you may have to compensate for it later in the day by reducing your total caloric intake or by burning a few extra calories while exercising. If you aren't confronted with holiday foods that day, just skip your one-a-day – but don't compensate and double-up on your serving the next day.

## 5. Always plan ahead – Never go to a party hungry

Before you go to a holiday party, eat a healthy snack. When you arrive at the party, you won't be craving hors d'oeuvres.

## 6. Be in charge of your party choices:

\*Small plate, please Be wise

when choosing appetizers – a small portion of some appetizers may help you from overeating at dinner. Pick up a small plate, and stick with vegetables, but limit or avoid the creamy dips. Restrict your intake of butter crackers, chips, cheese and meats. If you must have a deep-fried appetizer, eat only one small serving. Never go back for seconds. For dinner, fill half of your plate with salad and vegetables, one quarter with meat, and the final quarter with starch.

## 4. Avoid the sauce

Avoid sauces made from cream, half-and-half or meat drippings. For salads, use oil and vinegar, vinaigrette or low-fat dressings. Broth-based or vegetable sauces are fine.

## 5. What about desserts?

The best low-calorie choices are fruit, Jell-O, pudding, an unfrosted mini muffin, shortbread cookies, ginger snaps or angel food cake. If you must have a dessert with frosting, butter cream, cream cheese, or chocolate chips, limit yourself to one small cookie or one thin slice of cake.

## 6. Watch the drinks

Alcohol has a lot of empty calories, especially if you are choosing to go with one like egg-nog.

## 7. Say No Politely

Many times you feel forced to eat foods because people keep putting it in front of you. Learn to say no politely, such as "No thank you, I've had enough. Everything was delicious", or "I couldn't eat another bite. Everything tasted wonderful". You'll find saying no isn't so hard to do after all.

## 8. Focus on socializing

Don't stand around the food table when you are at a party – focus your energies on making conversation with others instead of focusing on foods. Conversation is calorie-free.

Remember, the holidays are meant to celebrate good times with family and friends. Enjoy the holidays and plan effective strategies to help you achieve your weight loss goals. Achieving what you sought out for will give you one more good reason for holiday cheer! Happy Holidays!

# YOUR MONEY MATTERS

## UNDERSTANDING THE THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN

The Thrift Savings Plan is an optional government-sponsored program providing retirement income for military service members. Although contributing to the TSP is optional, many take advantage of it, because, depending on whether the traditional TSP or the TSP ROTH option are selected, their contributions are either tax deferred or are tax free if withdrawn under specific circumstances. Also, your contributions and earnings in the TSP are yours to keep, whether you leave the military or stay in until retirement.

### Contributing to the Thrift Savings Plan

When you enroll in the TSP, you allocate a percentage of your pay to be contributed through payroll deductions. You can select from two different tax options: traditional or ROTH TSPs. With a traditional TSP, your contributions are pre-tax, meaning you do not pay taxes on them - or any earnings - until you withdraw them, usually after age 59 ½. With a ROTH TSP, your contributions are made after you have paid tax on the money, but the earnings are tax free. As with the traditional TSP, the minimum age for penalty-free withdrawals is at age 59 ½, if you satisfy the IRS requirements.

- Enrollment. The easiest way to enroll in the TSP is through MyPay. You may also enroll through your installation's finance office. Once enrolled, be sure to compare your TSP statement with your Leave and Earnings Statement to ensure the contribution amounts are correct.
- Tax-deferred contributions. Your traditional contributions to the TSP are taken before federal taxes are calculated. Therefore, you won't pay taxes on your contributions until you withdraw them.
- Tax-exempt earnings. Your ROTH contributions are taken out of your paycheck after your income is taxed. Contributions and earnings from ROTH accounts are tax free. As with the traditional, the minimum withdrawal age is 59 ½.
- Contribution amounts. You can choose to contribute a percentage of your basic pay, incentive pay or bonuses to the TSP. However, you must elect a portion of your basic pay in order to elect to contribute any amount from your incentive, special

or bonus pay. The Internal Revenue Service places limits on your TSP contributions, which change each year. For current IRS limits, visit the TSP website.

Your contributions will, by law, be invested in the Government Securities Investment Fund. Once you have a pin number, you can change where your contributions are invested by choosing your investment funds. You may choose just one fund or a combination of funds. Your options include:

- Individual funds.
- Government Securities Investment Fund
- Fixed Income Index Investment Fund
- Common Stock Index Investment Fund
- Small Capitalization Stock Index Fund
- International Stock Index Investment Fund

### Loans and withdrawals

Because the TSP is a retirement savings plan, loans or withdrawals before separation or retirement are restricted.

- Loans. Loans are available to members who are still in pay status. With a \$50 processing fee, you can borrow from your contributions and earnings. You pay back the loan, with interest, through payroll deductions.
- In-service withdrawals. Hardship withdrawals are available to members under certain, limited conditions. Also, members age 59 ½ or older (who are still in pay status) may make a one-time, age-based in-service withdrawal.

### Post-separation withdrawals

After you separate from the military, you have several withdrawal options.

- Partial withdrawal. You may make a one-time request to withdraw part of your account, leaving the balance to continue to accrue earnings for later withdrawals.
- Lump sum payment. You may receive a single payment of your entire TSP account, or you can request a portion of your balance paid as single payment and a designation of the remaining options

on the rest of your balance.

- Monthly payments. You specify a dollar amount to be sent each month, or the TSP will calculate your monthly payments based on your life expectancy. Again, you can request that a percentage of your balance be held in the TSP to make monthly payments (which continue to grow based on your investments) with the rest designated to the other options. Payment amounts can be changed once a year.
- Life annuity purchase. You can choose all or a portion of your account to go to an annuity, which is paid to you (or your survivor) every month for life. When you withdraw your money from TSP, you will owe taxes on any traditional contributions (except the portion of the balance made from tax-exempt pay) and the earnings they have accrued. You can continue to defer these taxes by transferring or rolling over your TSP withdrawal payment to a traditional individual retirement account or an eligible employer plan.

You can also transfer or roll over your traditional funds to a ROTH IRA, but you will have to pay taxes on the full amount in the year of the transfer. If you have ROTH contributions in your account, you have already paid taxes on them. You will not owe any further taxes on your ROTH contributions, and you will not owe taxes on their earnings if your withdrawal payment meets IRA requirements. Requirements state that five years must have passed since January 1 of the calendar year when you made your first ROTH TSP contribution and you have reached age 59 ½ or have a permanent disability. For more specific information on withdrawals, visit the TSP website.

Military OneSource Consultants provide information and make referrals on a wide range of issues, including personal financial management. Free face-to-face counseling sessions (and their equivalent by phone or online) are also available. Call 1-800-342-9647 or go to [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil) to learn more.

VeteransPlus provides free, confidential financial education counseling to service members and veterans. Their resources can help you better manage your finances, get control of any debt that you may have and learn how to save and invest for your future. For more information: [www.veteransplus.org](http://www.veteransplus.org) or call 888-488-8767.

# YOUR MONEY MATTERS

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR LEAVE & EARNINGS STATEMENT

There seems to be a bit of mystery around an LES. Since it's a financial statement that utilizes lots of abbreviations and acronyms, it's easy to see how people may think it's complicated. But really, even though it IS a lot of pay information formatted to fit on one page, it's not difficult to locate the key information that matters each month. And it's important to do so because it's about your money. Here are some of the items you will want to "pay" attention to.

What is an LES?

An LES is quite simply a monthly statement listing your military pay. It also includes the allowances you receive, as well as the leave, or vacation days, you have earned. That is why it is called a "leave" and "earnings" statement.

Your LES may be accessed electronically at myPay.

Military personnel will need a login and password unless they access the site from their DoD computer using a Common Access Card (CAC).

The latter is the safest way to view your financial record since the DoD network encrypts the information.

What is important for me to know about my LES? Your LES will establish how much money you will receive over a month. There are many changes to your LES, some which you initiate and others which may occur as a result of training or deployment, a change in laws or even a negligent debt. For sound financial health, it's important to stay on top of your monthly LES statement by paying attention to these items:

- Know what your pay should be. Check the pay tables for base pay.

Look for the current Basic Allowance for Subsistence, which is a payment to offset the cost of the service member's meals. Look up the Basic Allowance for Housing for your area if you are not living in government quarters. Also include any special or incentive pay, such as hostile fire pay or imminent danger pay, for which you qualify.

- Know what changes should occur to your pay. These would be deductions (includes taxes, Medicare and Social Security) and allotments (which include payments to bank accounts, insurance, savings bonds, charity or repayments of debt, such as delinquent taxes, unpaid spousal or child support, commercial debt and the like). If an expected change does not occur, be sure to contact your finance office as soon as possible to correct it.

- Be aware of your leave

balance. Service members earn 2.5 days per month and may lose unused leave over a certain balance, which currently is 75 days.

- Know that mistakes can happen. If you have been erroneously credited with pay over several pay periods, the overage could be deducted all at once, which may leave you suddenly with "no pay due."

- Keep a copy of one year's LES records. This will help you as you watch for changes from month to month so you will recognize when a problem occurs. It will help you to establish a basic expectation of your pay amount. If you deploy or you begin an allotment, you will be able to recognize how that will affect the amount of your paycheck.

Deciphering the LES form To understand each and every box on your LES, you

can refer to the branch-specific Understanding your LES page on the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) site. However, here are the key boxes you will want to review:

- Entitlements (Box 10) - This will list your base pay and any allowances you receive.

- Deductions (Box 11) - This will include taxes and insurance plans.

- Allotments (Box 12) - These deductions include payments, either voluntary or required, that are made to individuals, institutions or agencies.

- End of month pay (Box 19) - This tells you the actual amount of money you will be paid at the end of the month.

- Leave (Box 28) - This shows the current leave

balance available. This amount is based on the leave you have earned minus the amount you have used. You may also want to check Box 32 to see if you will lose any leave by not using it.

- Remarks (Box 76) - This is the area used to explain any changes to your pay, as well as to display notices from the command.

What if I see something wrong on my LES?

The most important action to take if something looks amiss is to visit your finance office or administrative unit for help. You may learn that it was not a mistake at all, or your concern may be validated. In either case, it's a good idea to have an expert review it. If you are unsure of where to go, access the support page of myPay for help.

# Resiliency: Managing Stress During the Holidays

Excerpt from Psychology Today

According to the American Psychological Association, stress is on the rise in America, with nearly half of Americans reporting that stress is having a negative impact on their personal and professional lives. Although the holidays can be a time of joy, they often bring with them additional stressors.

During the holidays we are often surrounded with images of people who are happy, in love and enjoying the whirlwind of their lives. In reality, however, this time of year can be difficult. When our lives don't match the images we see around us or live up to our own ideals of family and friendship, it can be painful.

And spreading all that good cheer, creating traditions and memories can be tiring and can exacerbate daily pressures and hassles.

The following tips are designed to help you find relaxation during this often-emotional time and to improve how you are thinking or feeling about the moment and the season.

1. Find meaning in the season. Find or reconnect to a purpose, meaning or value during the season. Contributing can give a sense of meaning and make you feel good about yourself. Give something to someone else, do volunteer work or do a surprising, thoughtful thing.

2. Anticipate obstacles to your sense of well-being. Take a few moments and remind yourself of circumstances that intensified your stress in past years. For example, looking back, you might notice you often feel lonely. Conversely, you may have a tendency to overschedule yourself. Or you might find a particular family gathering painful. Once you know you have identified a few of the more stressful moments of the holidays, you can plan how to approach them, possibly using some of

the strategies below to get through them with less stress and emotional pain.

3. Do only one thing in the moment. Doing just one thing can give you time to settle down in the midst of a frantic or chaotic day or week. Focus your entire attention on what you are doing now. Let go of the mental listmaking, worrying, and party planning. Put your mind in the present and focus on physical sensations, such as walking. You can also do one thing in the moment right at home by focusing on tasks around the house, like washing dishes, listening to music or decorating.

4. If you're feeling down, do something opposite to how you feel. When your life isn't perfect, the holidays can bring up sadness, regrets and other painful emotions. Change your mood by engaging in activities that are opposite to how you're feeling. Read emotional books, listen to emotional music or go to emotional movies. Act with kindness and compassion toward those people who irritate you.

5. Schedule some memorable activities into your holiday season. Research indicates that happiness increases with experiences, rather than things. Reconnect with a childhood tradition or make a new one.

6. Try muscle relaxation. Whether you've had a day on your feet or sitting at your desk, extra stress can make your muscles tense and sore. Try to relax your muscles by tensing and resting each large muscle group. Start with your hands, clenching them into fists tightly for 10 to 15 seconds, then releasing the fist and allowing your hands to rest heavily on your lap for 30 seconds. Repeat the exercise a second time and then move to other muscles in your body, such as your arms, the muscles in your face, your shoulders, and your legs. When you're done, take a moment to rest and notice a feeling of heaviness in your body.

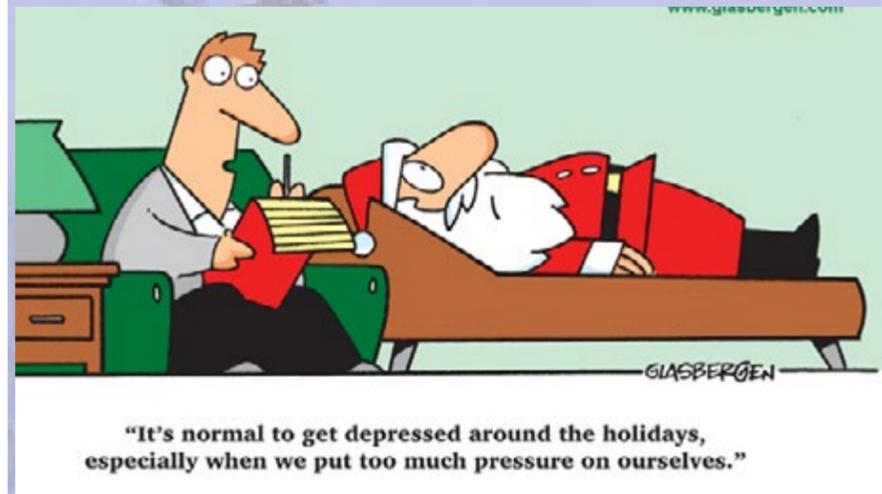
7. Self-soothe with taste. If you're out and tempted to graze on appetizers or other fast food without really tasting anything, pause, and then choose one food, slow down and really taste it. Or, if you're at home, take time to prepare a good meal or favorite soothing drink, such as hot chocolate or warm apple cider. Then sit, do nothing else and focus your attention on tasting and savoring the food or drink.

8. Try deep breathing. Lie on your back, breathing evenly and gently. Focus your attention on your breath, coming in and out and the movement of your stomach. As you breathe in, allow your stomach to rise. Exhale fully, pushing all the air out of your lungs. Continue for 10 breaths.

9. Clean the house. The holidays often bring extra chores and cleaning. Use them as an opportunity to self-soothe, rather than as an additional stress. Divide your work into stages: straightening things and putting them away, then scrubbing and cleaning. Allow a good length of time for each task. Move slowly (three times more slowly than usual) and focus your attention fully on each task. Maintain awareness of your actions and your thoughts if they wander. Bring them back to full attention on the task at hand.

This time of year can be tiring, lonely, overwhelming, financially difficult and can bring up painful conflicts and reminders of painful circumstances and feelings.

Not all of these strategies will be right for you. Choose two or three that you believe will help you and try them. They just might help you get through the season with a little less stress and a few more moments of calm and peace.



"It's normal to get depressed around the holidays, especially when we put too much pressure on ourselves."



"Let's keep everyone healthy over the holidays. Plenty of sunscreen for the snowmen, diabetes testing for the sugarplum fairies, a gluten-free diet for the gingerbread man, and lets put up a basketball hoop for the elves!"



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