



# Ohio Adjutant General's Department

Mike DeWine, Governor

Major General John C. Harris Jr., Adjutant General

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For Immediate Release

## **Ohio National Guard called to support COVID-19 response**

*Guard members to assist with food distribution*

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Gov. Mike DeWine signed a state active duty proclamation on March 18 that will activate approximately 300 personnel from the Ohio National Guard to assist with humanitarian efforts supporting the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Soldiers will support the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Association of Foodbanks at locations throughout Ohio. They will be assisting Ohioans during this health crisis by transporting, packaging, and distributing food to homes in vulnerable areas, community-based locations, and partner agencies in rural counties.

“The action I’ve taken to activate the Ohio National Guard will provide support to our food pantries that are low on staff and need help getting food to some of our most vulnerable citizens,” said Gov. DeWine. “By looking out for our neighbors and following proper health safety guidelines, we will make it through this together.”

Guard members from the 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, headquartered in Columbus, have been requested to assist local food distributions in Allen, Butler, Clark, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Hocking, Lorain, Lucas, Mahoning, Montgomery, and Summit counties.

Members of the Ohio Military Reserve, a component of the Ohio state defense force, will also be placed on state active duty to coordinate with the Ohio Association of Foodbanks at the food bank locations.

“Our state is tackling the public health issue caused by the outbreak of COVID-19. We have a responsibility to respond when our governor and fellow Ohioans need our assistance,” said Maj. Gen. John C. Harris Jr., Ohio adjutant general. “We have a long history of supporting the state and nation during times of emergency. Our Guard members are coming from counties across the state to serve their own communities, ensuring their neighbors continue to receive food and pantry items.”

In the meantime, Harris added, the Ohio National Guard stands ready to support any additional requests in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We welcome these National Guard members as part of our foodbank family and thank them for their dedication and diligence in the weeks ahead,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. “We encourage our clients and community members to join us in welcoming them with gratitude and friendship as they assist us in our important work.”

There are more than 16,000 Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen in the Ohio National Guard, which is the nation’s fourth-largest National Guard. Ohio National Guard members work and live in nearly every community across the state and have a proven track record of success supporting civilian authorities during and after homeland emergencies, including:

- In 2009, when the H1N1 Pandemic hit, the Ohio National Guard distributed vital vaccinations and medical supplies.
- In 1978, Guard members helped evacuate stranded motorists, delivered supplies, and cleared snow from roadways during the blizzard that hit Ohio.
- During the 2017 hurricane season, more than 400 Ohio National Guard Airmen and Soldiers deployed to Texas, Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico to assist in recovery efforts.

Information about COVID-19 is available through the Ohio Department of Health at <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/> or by calling 1-833-4-ASK-ODH.

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**EDITOR’S NOTES:** Maj. Gen. John C. Harris Jr. is a member of Gov. Mike DeWine’s cabinet and is responsible for the command and military readiness of the Ohio Army National Guard, Ohio Air National Guard, and the state defense force consisting of the Ohio Military Reserve, Ohio Naval Militia, and Ohio Cyber Reserve.

For a complete bio and high-resolution official photo of Maj. Gen. Harris, visit <https://ong.ohio.gov/leadership/tag/index.html>.

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