



Ohio Adjutant General's Department

Mike DeWine, Governor

Major General John C. Harris Jr., Adjutant General

Dec. 11, 2020
Log# 20-32

For Immediate Release

Ohio National Guard helps state prepare for COVID-19 vaccine distribution

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Military and civilian partners form an assembly line around tables and carefully work together to safely transfer glass vials into small boxes. Time is of the essence to keep the vials super cold. The vials are empty now and the packaging assembly lines are just for practice, as the Ohio National Guard works with the Ohio Department of Health to prepare for the arrival of a COVID-19 vaccine.

About two dozen Guard members have been working with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) at the state's Receive, Store, and Stage (RSS) warehouse to develop the logistics plan to receive and repackage the vaccine for distribution.

"We've been conducting daily drills for several weeks with our civilian partners to safely and effectively handle the vaccine that will be processed by ODH at the RSS warehouse," said Ohio Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Timothy Merle of the 121st Air Refueling Wing in Columbus and the noncommissioned officer in charge of the RSS warehouse mission. "We have to maintain the vaccine at a certain temperature, so time is of the essence."

When vaccines are ready to be shipped from the RSS warehouse, they must be removed from ultracold storage and repackaged with dry ice in under two minutes. Ohio Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Gregory Sprowls, an air transportation specialist with the 121st Air Refueling Wing, used his military skills to help create the logistics plan.

"A lot of what we do in the military is based on a timeframe. You know when the plane is going to land and you only have a certain amount of time to unload it safely," Sprowls said. "We have taken that mindset and transferred it to a smaller scale to accomplish an orderly, repeatable process for handling the vaccine."

Sprowls said the partnership between Air and Army National Guard members and ODH employees, working seamlessly as one team, will make this a successful mission.

"Everyone understands the importance of this mission," he said. "Getting the vaccine to the people who need it is the key to getting back to some sort of normalcy."

At the request of Gov. Mike DeWine, the Ohio National Guard has been providing support at the RSS warehouse since March to ensure personal protective equipment, or PPE, as well as COVID-19 test kits and other supplies reach health care professionals and other Ohioans who are on the front line of saving lives.

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EDITOR'S NOTES: Sound bites from Merle and Sprowls are available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/776090/ohio-national-guard-assists-with-preparing-covid-19-vaccine-distribution>.

B-roll is available from Gov. Mike DeWine's office at https://lnks.gd//eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbi9saW5rX2IkljoxMDIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpiYGljaylslmJ1bGxldGluX2IkljoiMjAyMDEyMDEuMzEzOTU4OTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5kcm9wYm94LmNvbS9zaC96MDkxczZocGwwZ25mbnlvQUFBbTVKT3NJYUlsOHY4eTB FajJhVzY5YS8yMDIwLjE5LjAxJTlwR292ZXJub3IIMjBEZVdpbmUIMjBUb3VycyUyMFJTUyUyMFdhcmVob3VzZSUyMEJST0xMLm1wND9kbD0wln0.HRy6m59MW_skrjUDohOG64iXPwAEzM_KqRFpLWqsB7k/s/953904115/br/90857797029-l.

Photos are available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/6448591/time-essence-ohio-guard-members-help-prepare-covid-19-vaccine-distribution>.

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