

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

Phone: [605-737-6721](tel:605-737-6721) Email: ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil Web: sd.ng.mil



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 27, 2019

SD National Guard provides water to Pine Ridge residents

PINE RIDGE, S.D. – Thirteen members of the South Dakota Army National Guard helped distribute drinkable water to communities on the Pine Ridge Reservation this weekend after recent flooding damaged a main waterline in Oglala County that left more than 8,000 residents without water.

Gov. Kristi Noem activated the National Guard on March 22 to provide water distribution support, and within 24 hours Soldiers from the Watertown-based Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, were onsite providing water to those in need in the communities of Red Shirt, Manderson, Porcupine, Evergreen and Wounded Knee.

“Our mission is to provide water to five local communities here on the reservation who are out of water,” said Sgt. Joe Meyer, 139th noncommissioned officer in charge of operations, of Beresford. “It always feels good to help out local communities when they are in a time of need.”

“The people have been without water for several days,” said Sgt. David Fuegen, 139th water distribution specialist, of Aberdeen. “It’s been pretty much a non-stop flow of people coming in trying to get water.”

“A lot of the people are just so happy the Guard came to help us out with our water situation,” said Jim Miller, of Porcupine. “A lot of the people here can’t use their bathrooms, can’t shower. Especially for our elderly and people who live off road. We are really grateful for the Guard coming and doing their part.”

The Soldiers deployed with five Load Handling System vehicles equipped with five Compatible Water Tank Racks, or “hippos.” The hippo has the capability to receive, store and distribute up to 2,000 gallons of potable water per system.

“We are part of a bigger team with efforts happening down here. Distributing water is just one part of it,” said Lt. Col. Lew Weber, SDARNG support operations officer, of Rapid City. “The emergency management people here are doing a fantastic job and they have been great to work with. We are just happy we can be an enabler to help them complete their mission.”

The National Guard members provided water from a central location in each community until the waterline was restored. Residents brought in bottles, containers, coolers and even tanks to receive the water.

“We’ve filled up numerous different sizes of containers, tanks – from one gallon all the way up to 200 gallons,” said Meyer.

By the second day of the operation, the need for water quickly expanded to the communities of Kyle and Sharps Corner. Many residents have been picking up water to help deliver it to community members who are unable to reach the distribution points due to flooding conditions.

“There have been a lot of community members that get water for other people,” said Meyer. “There are a lot of elders that can’t make it to our water points.”

-more-

“We’ve seen neighbors helping neighbors, families helping families – everyone is coming together,” said Weber. “We’ve seen people come here and take water out to people who can’t get out of their homes themselves.”

By the third day of the Guard’s mission, the county waterline was repaired. During their three days providing support, the Soldiers distributed nearly 9,500 gallons of water.

The Soldiers said the community was appreciative of their help and were happy to provide assistance.

“We are really grateful to all of you,” said Miller. “I’m so humble and grateful and honored to meet all of you and thank you for your service. It means a lot to our community and all of us here.”

“The community has been overwhelming with thank yous, we’re glad you’re here, and keep up the good work,” said Spc. Tracy Lennick, 139th water distribution specialist, of Rapid City. “It feels great to be down here. A remote location such as this is why I believe the Guard definitely has its place. They absolutely needed us. They called, we came.”

“I have a family at home and they know why I wear this uniform, and when people need help I go,” said Fuegen. “I joined the Guard to be able to help, and that’s why I’m here.”

-30-

High resolution photos are available upon request.



190325-Z-TL287-0009: South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers with Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, provide drinkable water to residents of Sharps Corner, S.D., on the Pine Ridge Reservation, March 25, 2019. Thirteen SDARNG Soldiers were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



190325-Z-TL287-0017: (From left) South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers Spc. Tracy Lennick, Sgt. David Fuegen and Lt. Col. Lew Weber fill containers with drinkable water for residents of Sharps Corner on the Pine Ridge Reservation, S.D., March 25, 2019. Thirteen SDARNG Soldiers with Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



190325-Z-TL287-0043: Lester Rowland loads containers of drinkable water into his car with the help of U.S. Army Spc. Tracy Lennick, Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, at Sharps Corner on the Pine Ridge Reservation, March 25, 2019. Thirteen SDARNG Soldiers were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



190325-Z-TL287-0028: U.S. Army Sgt. David Fuegen, right, and Spc. Tracy Lennick, members with Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, provide drinkable water to Lester Iron Cloud at Sharps Corner, S.D, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, March 25, 2019. Thirteen SDARNG Soldiers were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



190325-Z-TL287-0030: Lester Iron Cloud thanks U.S. Army Spc. Tracy Lennick, with Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, after receiving drinkable water at Sharps Corner, S.D, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, March 25, 2019. Thirteen SDARNG Soldiers were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



190325-Z-TL287-0054: U.S. Army Sgt. Seth Greenough, left, and Spc. Roderick McRae, center, and Spc. Baily Toering, members of Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, provide drinkable water to a resident of Porcupine, S.D, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, March 25, 2019. Thirteen SDARNG Soldiers were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



190325-Z-TL287-0060: Jim Miller, a U.S. Army Vietnam veteran, thanks U.S. Army Sgt. Seth Greenough, Spc. Roderick McRae and Spc. Baily Toering, members of Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, as they provide drinkable water to residents of Porcupine, S.D, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, March 25, 2019. Thirteen SDARNG Soldiers were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



190325-Z-TL287-0070: U.S. Army Spc. Keith German, Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, provides drinkable water for residents of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation, S.D., March 25, 2019. Thirteen SDARNG Soldiers were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



190325-Z-TL287-0074: Residents of Wounded Knee, S.D., load jugs of drinkable water into a truck on the Pine Ridge Reservation, March 25, 2019. Thirteen South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers from Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, were activated for state duty in Pine Ridge after a county waterline failed due to extreme flooding leaving residents in seven communities without water in their homes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact the SDNG Public Affairs Office at (605) 737-6721 or e-mail ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil