

## Hawaii National Guard supports Big Island relief efforts after Hurricane Iselle

August 16, 2014 - Big Island, Hawaii – Getting to work on time can be stressful. Usually there is no valid explanation to excuse tardiness to military duty. One Airman with the Hawaii Air National Guard's 291st Combat Communications Squadron found himself with a rare, valid excuse when he was unable to report for duty on time.

SMSGt Makani Miller had been tasked to support the Hilo Emergency Operation Center (EOC), activated in response to Hurricane Iselle and Hurricane Julio heading towards Hawaii. On the day of the storm Miller couldn't report to the EOC because wind gusts from the storm had caused huge trees to fall around the property surrounding his house.

At first light after the storm passed, SMSGt Miller enlisted the aid of his family and neighbors. Together they cleared the driveway with chain saws; enough to allow him to depart for work. In fact, the Miller family all reported for active duty with the Hawaii National Guard. Spouse, Technical Sergeant Rita Miller and son, Airman First Class Kawika Miller, are also assigned to the 291st Combat Communications Squadron on the Island of Hawaii.

While this was the first time SMSGt Miller had to chain saw his way to work, this was not the first time that he had reported to the Hilo EOC. "In June, we had participated in the State Emergency Response exercise, 'Makani Pahili'. It was a good opportunity for us to practice what we are doing right now," said Miller.

"This storm was an eye opener for us. The Hurricane was downgraded to a tropical storm and the second Hurricane ended up going north of the island chain," said Miller. "We will take lessons learned from this and incorporate them into our updated state disaster response plans."

About 180 Hawaii National Guardsmen were called to some kind of active duty status in support of storm relief efforts.

The Hawaii National Guard stood up a Joint Task Force Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the Army Training Facility in Hilo. This EOC provided command and control for debris clearing teams, damage assessment teams, and presence patrols at Disaster Recovery Assistance Centers and throughout the Puna district. The JTF Hawaii also coordinated the delivery of 55,000 pounds of ice to the Hawaiian Paradise Park, Hawaiian Beaches, Leilani Estates and Nanawale community centers.

The ice and additional equipment for disaster relief were flown in from Oahu to Hawaii by a Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam C-17.

"The objective was to get the Guard out to the hard hit areas first and assist with debris clearing," said Colonel Moses Kaiwi, JTF Hawaii commander. "Clearing the roads allows for the essential services to get in the areas that require support."

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The Hawaii Air National Guard's 204th Airlift Squadron delivers a C-17 full of ice that will go to relief efforts on Hawaii Island.



Hawaii Governor, Neil Abercrombie, Adjutant General, Major General Major General Darryll Wong and Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, Administrator Doug Mayne, flew from Honolulu to Hilo in one of Hawaii Army National Guard's Blackhawk Helicopters.



A crew from the Army National Guard removes Albizia trees from a Nanawale residence.