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Isle National Guard units clearing debris on Kauai

By KARIN STANTON
West Hawaii Today

Two Hawaii National Guard units began clearing debris and making initial repairs at five Kauai schools Thursday, less than a week after Hurricane Iniki flattened them.

More than 1,000 soldiers from the islands of Oahu, Maui and the Big Island are assisting with hurricane relief efforts, including transporting supplies, re-establishing communications and providing security and food.

The 129 soldiers of Oahu's 227th Engineering Company, 29th Infantry Brigade, and 298th Engineer Detachment, Troop Command, arrived on Kauai Tuesday equipped with vehicles, carpentry tools and chain saws to repair roofs and clear roads. The units also cleared debris from the Emergency Operating Center and State Building before beginning clean-up efforts at Lihue's Wilcox Elementary School.

The soldiers also are scheduled to clean up Kauai High School and King Kaumualii, Hanalei and Kilauea Elementary Schools.

Also aiding the rebuilding efforts are 78 members of the 297th Supply and Service Battalion, who arrived on Kauai Sept. 14 to hand out water and other supplies from five Distribution and Disaster Assistance Centers.

In addition to fresh fruit and vegetables, military Meals-Ready-To-Eat and water, each center also will supply plastic sheeting, batteries and some building materials.

The distribution centers will be located at the Hanapepe Army National Guard Armory, Kalaheo Neighborhood Center, Hawaii War Memorial Convention Hall in Lihue, Kapaa Army National Guard Armory and Princeville Playground (across from the library).

"We want to help the public," said Maj. Dean Inouye of Headquarters, Headquarters Detachment, 297th Supply and Service Battalion. "As soon as supplies come in, we'll push them out."

Others wishing to help those affected by Hurricane Iniki and other disasters may make cash and check donations to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund at the following banks: Hawaii National Bank, Liberty Bank, First Hawaiian Bank, Bank of Hawaii and Central Pacific Bank.

Donations also may be mailed to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, in care of the Hawaii Red Cross, 4155 Diamond Head Rd., Honolulu, Hawaii 96816, or made with a credit card by calling 1-800-842-2200.