

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JOINT SENATE VAEP/TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE HEARING**

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BRIGADIER GENERAL ANTHONY J. CARRELLI

ACTING ADJUTANT GENERAL, PENNSYLVANIA NATIONAL GUARD

Senators, thank you for the opportunity to testify concerning the Pennsylvania National Guard's response to Winter Storm Jonas, that occurred January 23-24, 2016. It is always a pleasure to extoll the virtues and accomplishments of the Soldiers and Airmen of the Pennsylvania National Guard. In my remarks, I will discuss the Pennsylvania National Guard's response to the storm and provide further detail about our direct support to the Turnpike closure.

The Pennsylvania National Guard works directly with PEMA who provides the Guard with tasking orders anywhere in the Commonwealth. Those tasking assignments are processed through the National Guard's Joint Emergency Operations Center at Fort Indiantown Gap and then assigned to the National Guard's Pennsylvania Task Forces (PTF's - 3 total, West, North, and South). The PTF's provide Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers (EPLOs) that are specifically assigned and trained at each of our 67 County Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs). The PTFs also direct units within their geographic assignment area to fulfill the tasking orders as assigned by PEMA.

For winter storm Jonas, the Pennsylvania National Guard called a total of 331 Soldiers and Airmen to State Active Duty. They conducted 19 missions assigned by PEMA in support of 11 counties. Missions (outside of the Turnpike response) were primarily public safety, health and welfare, and mobility support to Pennsylvania State Police, local law enforcement, and other first responders. Examples of missions conducted included using High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs) to drive doctors and nurses to local hospitals in Philadelphia, escorting EMTs in Harrisburg, and transporting first responders to and from their place of work in Carlisle.

Three of those nineteen assigned missions supported relief efforts on the Turnpike near Somerset, Pa. Throughout the storm on Saturday the National Guard responded by sending 92 Soldiers and 40 military vehicles to the Turnpike. Upon arrival, the Pa. State Police were in direct on site command of the Guardsmen and directly integrated with dozens of other local, county, and state response agencies as well as other volunteers to assist motorists. The Guardsmen used 28 HMMWV light cargo vehicles, 10 Light Medium Tactical Vehicle (LMTV) medium sized cargo trucks, and 2 large Vehicle Wreckers to conduct health and welfare checks, distribute food and water, transport the motorists to awaiting busses for movement to the shelters, and pull out tractor-trailers, busses, and cars from the backlog. The National Guard also completed a transportation mission for the pickup, movement,

and distribution of 4,000 meals from Altoona to both the rescue shelter and Turnpike locations. Despite the utilization of the Guard's heavy equipment, much of the work that day was on the backs and shoulders of those 92 Soldiers as well as the others gathered to assist. Much of that day was spent trudging through deep snow, battling low visibility and high winds, shoveling vehicles out by hand, and using brute force to extricate them from the highway. Most Guardsmen were not dismissed from State Active Duty until later Sunday. They then returned home to dig out their own families in time to then report to their civilian jobs on Monday.

After the mission was complete, all 331 Guardsmen returned home uninjured after operating for 24+ hours in one of the worst snowstorms in our history. To their credit and the credit of the other responders that weekend, none of the motorists assisted on the Turnpike sustained any injuries throughout the mission.

Once again your Pennsylvania National Guard assembled a force from within our communities and responded to the calls of other citizens in need. Your Soldiers and Airmen proved the value of the investment the nation and state have made in their training and equipment. As we have seen in the other storms in recent memory, such as Super Storm SANDY in 2012, Winter Storm PAX in 2014, or Winter Storm Juno in 2015, the Pennsylvania National Guard responded effectively, safeguarding the lives and property of the citizens of Pennsylvania. As

is our practice in the military, we will take the lessons learned from this storm and apply them to our planning for the next major event so that our response will be even more effective. I would also like to thank the rest of our community partners who were standing shoulder to shoulder with our Guardsmen. It was a tremendous team effort which in the end eased suffering and saved lives. I am proud to serve as the Acting Adjutant General commanding such selfless and courageous men and women who are willing to serve the commonwealth in times of great need, and I hope you are proud of them as well. I am now prepared to answer any questions that members of the committee may have.