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Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

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VA's Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System provides surge support to combat COVID-19

Activation shifts internal personnel to focus on hardest hit areas of the pandemic

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began shifting medical personnel, recently, with the first employees arriving to support efforts in New Orleans, LA, one of the country's hardest hit areas impacted by the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Through VA's [Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System](#) (DEMPS) medical professionals are deployed, as VA continues to solicit fully credentialed volunteers from within its workforce, to reinforce staffing levels in New Orleans.

Internally, VA is currently seeking personnel with intensive care unit and medical or surgical ward experience, as well as biomedical technicians with expertise using ventilators and other personnel to support the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System's response to COVID-19. This is a normal and routine part of VA's response to both local and national disasters. Information on VA's COVID-19 Response plan can be found [here](#).

To support rapid response by our personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic, we need volunteers to care for patients in high risk areas. Employees who complete a 14-day in-person DEMPS deployment will be offered a \$5,000 award for their service.

"VA has great medical personnel throughout the nation supporting our Veterans battling COVID-19," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Some of our facilities need additional assistance and that's why VA is taking a variety of prudent actions to properly staff for this emergency. The activation of DEMPS will help one of our facilities in a very challenging area have the additional staff they need to care for our nation's Veterans."

VA has been working to shift most outpatient care to telehealth operations and has postponed the majority of elective and non-emergent procedures. This minimizes the risk of infection, while allowing more Veterans to receive care through minimal contact with staff, saving time and reducing the consumption of personal protective equipment. VA is also screening all Veterans and staff members for infection with COVID-19 as indicated by [Centers for Disease Control medical guidance](#).

VA encourages Veterans, staff members and their families to [take everyday precautions](#) to protect against respiratory illnesses caused by COVID-19, the flu, and the common cold, and to follow the guidance of their local and state healthcare and emergency management officials.

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