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VA employees volunteer in droves to answer nation's call to support communities hard-hit by COVID-19

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that more than 1,000 VA staff have volunteered for more than 3,700 deployments — the most for a single emergency — in response to COVID-19.

To date, VA personnel have deployed to more than 49 states and territories to support VA medical centers with surges of COVID-19 cases and to provide support to state and community nursing homes.

“The pandemic has shown that VA health care staff do not waiver in their dedication to care for Veterans, their fellow Americans and our country,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “During an incredibly challenging time, these volunteers left their homes and families in order to care for the sick and support their colleagues. I commend them for their service.”

Staff members volunteer to deploy through VA’s Disaster Emergency Personnel System (DEMPS), which is the department’s main program for deploying clinical and non-clinical staff to an emergency or disaster elsewhere in the country. The all-volunteer assignments vary in skillsets, geographic locations and length of time for the support.

VA staff are currently deployed to facilities and Federal Emergency Management Agency regional response coordination centers across Arkansas, California, Delaware, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada,

New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Since its inception in 1997, the DEMPS program continues a long history of service and support that has grown in scope and complexity. DEMPS volunteers deployed to New Orleans in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and Puerto Rico regarding Hurricane Sandy in 2012. In 2017, in the span of four months, DEMPS deployed more than 1,200 staff in response to hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

The state and community support is provided as part of VA’s [Fourth Mission](#) to assist the nation in times of emergencies and disasters. During the pandemic, VA has supported states with direct patient clinical care, testing, education and training and provided more than 908,000 pieces of personal protective equipment including gowns, gloves, masks, face shields and other resources. As part of Fourth Mission of humanitarian support, VA has also admitted 376 non-Veteran citizens for COVID-19 care at VA medical centers.

A summary of VA’s Fourth Mission activity in response to COVID-19 can be found [here](#).

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