Press Release

Release Nr: 2005-03

May 21, 2020

Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum command team urges community to remain vigilant to COVID-19 protective measures during holiday weekend

Fort Drum, NY - With people looking forward to the long Memorial Day weekend, senior leaders at Fort Drum reminded community members to stay safe and continue practicing the mitigation measures implemented for their protection throughout the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This includes the 60-mile radius travel restriction, which was the foremost topic addressed at a virtual town hall May 21.

Brig. Gen. Brett Funck, 10th Mountain Division (LI) and Fort Drum deputy commanding general-readiness, said that keeping certain restrictions in place is the responsible thing to do, and it has proven successful. He said that all personnel from division headquarters that deployed last week were tested and resulted in no positive cases.

“We continue to see very low rates of COVID-19 in our community,” he said. “We believe our actions and some of our mitigation measures continue to keep us at a lower risk.”

He said that outside of the North Country region, the risk of COVID-19 exposure increases, as many surrounding areas still have higher rates of active COVID-19 cases.

“The point of the 60-mile radius is to protect us, to keep us safe and keep our risk low from that community that is still working through a higher-risk population for COVID-19,” Funck said.

If someone travels outside the radius, it is only by exception to policy and it requires approval by a general officer. Additionally, Funck said that there is no change to the requirement that Soldiers’ requests for visitor passes must have chain-of-command approval.

“If we know that our population size is at low risk here, then the most likely way it (COVID-19) will be introduced is through someone coming outside our bubble and into it,” he said.

Command Sgt. Maj. Mario Terenas, 10th Mountain Division (LI) senior enlisted adviser, said that people have a responsibility to protect themselves, each other and the community. A pandemic, by definition, pertains to all people, so Terenas asked community members to be considerate of one another.

 “Have a great time with your families, and find those opportunities within and around that 60-mile radius to enjoy,” he said. “But think constantly that we are still in this fight, and we still have to keep ourselves and this community safe.”

Col. Jeffery Lucas, Fort Drum garrison commander, said that the installation command team has worked with local community leaders consistently throughout the pandemic to communicate and collaborate efforts. He said that some easement in restrictions seen at Fort Drum may look different than off-post establishments – such as the opening of a barber shop and limited access of fitness facilities to Soldiers – but it is being implemented with slow, controlled steps and stringent safety protocols.

During the Q&A, Lucas responded to a question asked frequently at the town halls: the Education Center will re-open the second week of June. He also noted that Robert McEwen Library is currently operating through curbside service so patrons can check out books.

“I encourage you to call the library, use the online card catalog and curbside pickup, and continue to read as we go through the summer,” Lucas said.

However, other facilities – like the Youth Center and playgrounds – remain closed to discourage social gatherings that have the potential to attract larger numbers. Still, Lucas asked that people focus on what is available rather than what is off-limits. He encouraged people to enjoy open parks and local trails systems, or stop by Outdoor Recreation to rent a boat or fishing gear for a day at the lake.

“There are a lot of ways to go out and be active that you will find yourself so busy and close to home that the 60-mile restriction becomes something you don’t have to consider anymore,” Lucas said.

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