Press Release

Release Nr: 2310-05

Oct. 20, 2023

Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum supports city neighbors during water emergency

FORT DRUM, N.Y. – Just weeks earlier, Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade’s 548th Division Sustainment Support Battalion tested their water purification skills during a field training exercise at Fort Drum.

Now they are applying those skills in a real-world mission close to home.

Dozens of water treatment specialists and other Soldiers from the 548th DSSB delivered potable and non-potable water to City of Watertown residents Oct. 19 during an emergency caused by a major water main break.

Chief Warrant 2 Myiah Gilbert, 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade fuel and water systems technician, said M-105 tankers – what the Army calls “Water HIPPOS” – were dispatched to three water distribution sites in Jefferson County. She said the HIPPO has a 2,000-gallon capacity and a team of specialists will be on site during the distribution hours until the emergency ends.

“We’re also going to be sending out a TWPS, which is a tactical water purification system, in the event that we need to purify water,” she said.

The TWPS can provide up to 1,500 gallons of purified water per hour, drawn from most any ground source. It cleans water using several different stages of purification, starting with filtering the drawn water of sediment.

“But right now, everything has been going well at the site,” Gilbert said. “There has been great communication from the highest levels all the way down. Getting the information we need in a timely manner helps us to provide support as expediently as possible.”

Col. Matthew R. Myer, Fort Drum garrison commander, said that the installation’s emergency operations center (EOC) was activated so that key personnel from across Fort Drum and 10th Mountain Division (LI) could coordinate response efforts with local authorities.

During a press conference at Watertown City Hall, Myer said 4,000 gallons of water, drawn from the Fort Drum reserve supply, was sent to the distribution sites after the state of emergency was announced.

“If the need becomes greater, we do have the ability to go all the way up to about 28,000 gallons more,” he said.

Fort Drum, which normally receives half of its water supply from an off-post source, is currently drawing water completely from its water well system and there has been no loss of service during the state of emergency.

“Nobody should be without water,” Myer said. “And we’ll be able to provide that until the taps are turned back on.”

An additional water distribution site is available at the Post Exchange for Fort Drum community members who live in Watertown. Myer said this will help alleviate wait times at the off-post sites.

Working late into the night, Gilbert said the Soldiers were excited to support the community this way.

“This is what the Army does,” she said. “We support our communities and our country.”

Sgt. Carmelo Rodriguez was one of the water treatment specialists (92W) at the Watertown High School water distribution site. He said that when the emergency was announced, his company and battalion immediately began assessing what equipment they would need to support the relief effort.

“We always train as if we are operating in a real environment, so we always have that focus in mind,” he said. “So, when any kind of situation pops up, like this, we are ready to perform and do our jobs as a 92W.”

Col. Matthew Braman, 10th Mountain Division (LI) deputy commander for operations, said the aid from Fort Drum carries forward a longstanding commitment to providing mutual support with their North Country neighbors.

“We are always here to support each other because we are all in the same community,” he said.

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For further information regarding this release, contact Fort Drum Public Affairs at (315) 772-8286 or email [julie.a.halpin2.civ@army.mil](mailto:julie.a.halpin2.civ@army.mil)

Photo Caption: Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade’s 548th Division Sustainment Support Battalion, arrived at Watertown High School on Oct. 19 with two M-105 tankers to deliver water to residents during a state of emergency caused by a major water main break. Fort Drum and 10th Mountain Division officials said Soldiers will provide water distribution support at three sites in Jefferson County, and an additional site was established on post for Fort Drum Soldiers, family members and Department of the Army civilians who live in Watertown. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)