August 2020

A Memo to Vermont Employers
Impacted by Upcoming Deployments

From the Vermont Committee for
Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

You have most likely heard by now through the media that we are expecting a reasonably large series of activations and deployments of Vermont Army National Guard soldiers, tentatively scheduled for early calendar year 2021. In addition, a group of airmen of the VT Air National Guard are also expected to deploy this Fall (2020) into 2021. Between now and then, many of those citizen service members may also be involved in additional training, often but not always scheduled around their normal drill weekends.

As their employers, you share these Guard men and women and reservists – with their loved ones – and with their military organizations. While the departure of these employees creates hardship for you, it cannot equate to the hardship experienced by their families and loved ones. It is the support that they receive from you, however, that gives them confidence that their job is secure when they return, and that allows them to focus on their military mission while deployed.

Your support to these men and women, as this significant event approaches – and as they prepare to perform their duty as part of the U.S. military in defense of our national security – becomes most critical. Many of you across the state have often asked, “How can I help?”

- First, reach out to your employees to learn who among them may be deploying. While it’s our hope that they will contact you as early as possible, some may not be inclined to have that conversation until later on, closer to the deployment.

- Once you’ve identified the soldiers and airmen who will deploy, have the conversation, right now, about how you will get the work done when this employee leaves, and how you can smoothly transition them back into your workforce when they finish their tour of duty. Have a detailed conversation with them concerning duties, process and standardized procedures. Engage in the services of Vermont agencies like VMEC or an SBDC for assistance.
• Become familiar with the key aspects of the Uniformed Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA.) Go to: https://www.esgr.mil/USERRA/USERRA-for-Employers for initial information or a refresher and also see “FAQ’s in the same section. Know your rights and responsibilities as an employer. Review your current military leave policy and practice to ensure that it’s been updated in accordance with USERRA (contact us if you would like help.) Consider additions to your policy such as paying a differential to someone on military leave so they will stay “whole” with their pay while serving. We can also provide you with a “Non-Technical Guide to USERRA.”

• From a very human perspective, consider how you can assist the employee’s family when they are deployed. Stay in touch, ask if they need help in any way (shovel snow, mow the lawn, give a ride, lend a hand.) Encourage company colleagues to contact them as well. Often, the family becomes lost and forgotten when the service member is away – although the Guard has a strong family assistance network, please don’t assume that “somebody else” is taking care of them!

• There is no better time than now to consider signing an ESGR Employer Statement of Support for your organization. The Statement of Support is a visible sign and constant reminder of the commitment that you make to these employees, and to your country. Call us or go online to request an employer Statement of Support https://www.esgr.mil/Employers/Statement-of-Support.) Join hundreds of companies around the state who have signed a statement to show their support for their Guard and Reserve members.

• ESGR is always seeking volunteers around the state who know the business landscape and are interested in educating other employers about rights and responsibilities under USERRA.

Please contact our office if you would like to receive your own employer Statement of Support for signing, or if you have questions about best ways to help your dual-career employees. Let us know as well if you are interested in serving as a Vermont ESGR committee volunteer. You can reach us by email at: linda.fowler10.ctr@mail.mil, or by phone at (802) 338-4187.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of Defense agency that seeks to promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees. We recognize outstanding support, increase awareness of the law, and resolve conflicts through mediation. We also facilitate meaningful employment opportunities for our service members and military spouses.