

Around the Department



Upcoming Events



- **September**
National Preparedness Month
- **Sept. 12 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.**
CSM Abby West Organizational Day - [more info here](#)
- **Oct. 9 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**
Reddit Ask-Me-Anything session about earthquakes & tsunamis. [Follow here](#) to take part.
- **Oct. 16 10:16 a.m.**
The Great WA ShakeOut earthquake and tsunami drill
- **Upcoming JSS events!**

Evergreen Magazine

Want to see more of what's happening in our agency? Check out the [Evergreen Magazine](#).



U.S. and Thai Armed Forces close out successful Enduring Partners 25



U.S. and Royal Thai Armed Forces successfully concluded the third annual Enduring Partners exchange on Aug. 28, 2025, after two weeks of intensive training and subject matter exchanges aimed at boosting readiness and strengthening military ties. The collaborative event, held at multiple locations achieved all its objectives to enhance bilateral relations and interoperability between the U.S. and Thailand.

"We have trained side-by-side, sharing knowledge and helping solidify interoperability..."

-Air Vice Marshal Nat Kham-in

"Enduring Partners is the only exercise, to my knowledge, of this kind, such that it has been born out of the State Partnership Program. It is also the largest exercise in the State Partnership Program portfolio," said Brigadier General Kenneth Borchers,

Commander, Washington Air National Guard.

This year's exchange marked a significant expansion, with soldiers from the 96th Aviation Troop Command, Washington Army National Guard actively participating for the first time alongside their Washington Air National Guard counterparts and

including airmen from the Utah Air National Guard. The program, which in its initial two years, primarily focused on air-

centric expertise and embraced a broader, multi-domain approach under the Multidomain Operation Concept (MDO).

Training activities, comprising both a...[read the rest here.](#)

24/7 CALL, TEXT, CHAT

Make mental health part of your preparedness journey

Story by: Hollie Stark, Outreach Program Manager, EMD

Content warning: suicide mentioned

This story is personal. I don't really want to tell it. What I want to do is regurgitate our standard three-pronged preparedness talking points – [know your hazards and reduce risk](#), [make plans](#), [gather supplies](#) (YOU SHOULD DO THOSE THINGS). But as I sit in front of my computer at the start of National Preparedness Month, this is the story that is begging to be told.

This story is also for everyone, so please bear with me as I try to weave some seemingly dichotomous thoughts into a coherent message about emergency management, being prepared and managing mental health throughout it all.

One year ago this month, I was preparing to attend the Washington State Emergency Management Association (WSEMA) conference. Our program – Hazards and Outreach – had a booth to

showcase our outreach materials and network with our local, state, tribal and federal partners, all while being edified by presentations from esteemed emergency management colleagues.

I remember with crystal clarity the day before the conference. All my booth materials were carefully packed and all my outfits were chosen (hey, I'm just a girl). I was anticipating the conference with all the exuberance of an extrovert who was about to reconnect with the myriad emergency management friends I had made since moving to Washington in September of 2022.

That is when I got a call I would not wish on anyone. It was the police, or maybe an EMT, I can't remember – it's funny how fast clarity can turn to confusion in times of emergency. My 16-year-old son had been found on the beach with a bottle of pills, most of which he had consumed, and was being taken by ambulance to the hospital. [Read the rest here.](#)

WMD in the News

Our GPS system is vulnerable, threatening everyday life. What's being done about it?

For National Guard kids, WANGY Camp memories last long after summer ends

Guard, U.S. Army Reserve conduct Helocast training in Pacific Northwest

Washington Air and Army National Guard and State Guard conduct a continuity of operations exercise

U.S. Army National Guard prepares for Enduring Partners

One Team, One Fight: WA National Guard Hosts Suicide Prevention 5K

Historic Flights Mark New Heights in U.S.-Thai Air Force Partnership

WSU Nursing Program helps train 141st ANG troops



Check out
Hollie on
the podcast
talking
all things
preparedness!

116th ASOS validates way ahead for TACPs at Sentry North 2025

Story & photos by: Master Sgt. Tim Chacon

The 116th Air Support Operations Squadron, part of the Washington Air National Guard, demonstrated the cutting edge of Air Force Special Warfare during Exercise Sentry North 2025 at Volk Field, Wisconsin May, 31 to June, 14, 2025. They trained alongside ASOS units from Pennsylvania, Kansas and Georgia in a full-scale, multi-domain exercise designed to push the limits of dynamic targeting and distributed command and control. The exercise tested operating in contested and communications-degraded scenarios with fifth-generation aircraft support.

"This exercise validated where we're going as a career field," said Lt. Col. Tim O'Mahoney, commander of the 116th ASOS. "We are taking what we have always been good at, communication, and building a model that brings forward sensing

and effects, command and control, integration and real-time target updates to the Air Force kill chain, all while maintaining a low signature to aid in survivability."

At the center of this evolution is distributed command and control. DC2 is a major shift from traditional models where ASOS teams operated in direct proximity to conventional Army headquarters. The 116th's teams can now operate in forward, mobile environments, supported by advanced communications with reduced electronic signatures.

"In the past, our command and control elements were co-located with Army Division or Corps Headquarters in the rear echelon. Now, we're building C2 nodes that are smaller, more mobile, and more agile," said O'Mahoney. "We're taking that capability of networking, voice, and data connectivity and putting it in a smaller package that can move and survive in austere, high threat environments" that can move and survive in austere, high-threat environments." [Read the rest here.](#)



Shout Outs



Cadets at WYCA take time for community service project

- Following the commitment to the WYCA 8 Core Components, cadets completed their first service to community project at Illahee State Park in Bremerton last month.
- The team focused on repairing and improving the park's trails.
- Park patrons expressed their gratitude for the cadets' efforts, and the project provided a meaningful opportunity for them to demonstrate teamwork, resilience, and a spirit of service.



TAG quarterly award winners announced

- These folks were nominated by their peers and selected for going above and beyond to help carry out our mission and provide exceptional customer service. Congrats to:
- Counseling Team, WYCA
- Dante DiSabatino, EMD
- Stephanie Hakala, EMD
- Kayla-An Austin, CFMO
- Serina Roberts, Finance
- Ryan Chandler, EMD



Welcome to our new Chief Information Office (CIO)

- He's spent the last 20+ years at Oklahoma State University – first as a student, then working in the campus police department for a few years before moving into IT.
- For the past 15 years, he's been focused on cyber security and IT leadership, most recently serving as the university's Information Security Officer.
- Say hi to Aaron in building 20B in state IT- or you can reach him at aaron.smith@mil.wa.gov



Washington Army National Guard selected for new Mobile Brigade

The Washington Army National Guard's 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team has been selected to take on a new mission and transform to a Mobile Brigade as part of a major U.S. Army modernization effort.

"Change isn't always easy, but this is a big win for us," said Brig. Gen. Paul Sellars, commanding general of the Washington Army National Guard. "Being chosen to make the shift to a mobile brigade is a testament to our organization and shows just how strong and capable our team is. This is another major milestone for the 81st, and for the entire Washington Army National Guard. It keeps our organization relevant and ready, whether we're called to help overseas or respond to emergencies here at home."

The transformation of the 81st means the brigade will replace its current fleet of Stryker vehicles with smaller, more mobile infantry squad vehicles (ISV), along with new technologies to include unmanned aerial systems.

As part of the transition, an infantry battalion from the Utah National Guard will join the newly formed 81st Mobile Brigade. Earlier this week,

**"Change isn't always
easy, but this is a big
win for us...
It keeps our
organization
relevant and ready,
whether we're called
to help overseas
or respond to
emergencies here at
home,"
said Brig. Gen. Paul
Sellars**

Sellars welcomed colleagues from Utah to discuss the transformation process.

"As we've learned before, transformations like these take a lot of time and patience," Sellars said. "It's nice to have a partner to go through this process with. We look forward to working with Utah and welcome their men and women to the 81st Brigade."

The 81st will begin returning Stryker vehicles in October 2025. It's anticipated it will take several months before every vehicle is turned in.

This marks the second major transformation for the 81st Brigade in the past decade. In 2015, the 81st transitioned from an Armored Brigade Combat Team with heavy tanks, to a Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

Announced in May 2025, the Army Transformation Initiative is a comprehensive effort to modernize the U.S. Army. The initiative includes converting both Infantry and Stryker Brigade Combat Teams into Mobile Brigade Combat Teams to improve mobility and lethality.

