



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Specialized Tennessee National Guard Unit aids Maryville Residents

Nashville, Tenn. - The Tennessee National Guard's 45th Civil Support Team (WMD) was ready early last Thursday morning to answer the call made by the Blount County Fire Department through TEMA. When a sheared axle punctured a CSX rail car carrying hazardous material it sparked a fire filling the air with hydrogen cyanide, a poisonous gas, in and around the city of Maryville. As many as 5000 citizens were evacuated from their homes due to unsafe air and potentially contaminated well water. The 45th deployed 11 personnel and equipment to assist local fire, EPA, and CSX officials with air monitoring of the evacuated area from Thursday to Saturday conducting 24 hour operations during that time.

National Guard Civil Support Teams were established to deploy rapidly to assist a local incident commander in determining the nature and extent of an attack or incident; provide expert technical advice on response operations; and help identify and support the arrival of follow-on state and federal military response assets.

"This unit is a great asset for the citizens of Tennessee and their track record of accomplishments supporting state and local first responders, not just in our state but other states as well, during times like these speaks for itself", stated Maj. Gen. Max Haston, Tennessee's Adjutant General.

"We hit the ground running" stated Capt. Jason Stockton, Deputy Commander of the 45th. "Shortly after staging for operations Thursday afternoon we got a call to go check on a private residence". Stockton continued, "the decision was made that the two elderly ladies living in the home needed to be evacuated to a nearby shelter, our guys led fire fighters into the residence while wearing protective clothing and monitoring the air quality."

One monitoring team cleared the Blount County Hospital to ensure patient safety. In total the 45th conducted air sampling at over 100 locations ensuring the air quality was safe for the citizens.

Stockton went on to say, "We just never know what mission we'll be called to complete next" but "our guys are up for the challenge and love every minute".

The mission of the Civil Support Teams (WMD) is to support local and state authorities at domestic incident sites by identifying agents and substances, assessing current and projected consequences, advising on response measures, and assisting with requests for additional military support.

The 45th CST(WMD) is a joint 22 person unit and consists of both Army National Guard and Air National Guard personnel. It is commanded by Air Force Maj. Matt Hayes. There are 55 CST's throughout the nation.

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PHOTO CAPTION:

Photo 1: Members of the 45th CST (WMD), Tennessee National Guard wear protective clothing while monitoring air quality in and around Blount County and the city of Maryville in the aftermath of a CSX rail car fire burning hazardous material.

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