Deployment Narrative Form

Required Fields

Date: 12/16/2020

Name (Rank, First, Last, Credentials): McNamara, Kathryn, REHS/RS, CSP

Deployment Team or Tier: NIST-B

Title/Position: Industrial Hygienist

OPDIV: NIH

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Narrative Questions [respond to as many as applicable]

1. What is your current assignment in USPHS?

I am an Industrial Hygienist in the Division of Occupational Health and Safety at the NIH in Bethesda, MD. My job duties include implementing industrial hygiene and safety programs for the NIH's community of clinicians, researchers, and support staff.

2. What was the mission of your deployment? (e.g. dates, location, and other pertinent details)

I deployed for the COVID-19 mission to hospital systems in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida where federal personnel were embedded to provide additional clinical support in August 2020.

3. What was your role during this deployment? What skills (scientific, personal, etc.) did you use?

I deployed as a Safety Officer as part of a 2-person Technical Assistance Team. We completed 11 site visits in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida to provide safety and infection control support for the PHS and NDMS teams stationed at the hospitals. I called upon many of my experiences working at the NIH for this deployment, such as respiratory protection, ventilation, and bloodborne pathogen safety.

4. Was this your first deployment? Either way, how did you prepare for the deployment, personally or work-wise?

This was actually my 7th PHS deployment overall, so my office knew the drill. I am fortunate to have amazing coworkers and leadership who are very supportive of the PHS mission and provide coverage while I am out. At home, I keep my FEMA Emergency Financial First Aid Kit up-to-date so my husband can access all of our accounts and make sure the bills are paid. I keep my go-bag packed for deployment so I can be at the airport as soon as I receive my flight details.

5. Do you have any advice or "pearls of wisdom" for fellow officers who are being deployed or are interested in deploying?

Deployments are always an amazing experience, but they can be physically and mentally taxing. I encourage you to reach out to a battle buddy to keep you honest and make sure you are taking 5 minutes to eat, stretch, or vent during a particularly stressful day.

6. What was the most important thing you learned during this deployment?

It was really important (and heartbreaking) to see firsthand how the COVID-19 pandemic is playing out across the country and exacerbating existing health disparities in some communities.

7. What were some of the key challenges that you experienced?

Every site and hospital system has different needs and priorities. Walking into a new environment, we needed to analyze the gaps and build relationships in a very short amount of time. Our challenge was to build capacity and work with the hospital and the deployed group so that they understood the tools they needed to keep themselves safe after our visit ended.

8. What did you enjoy the most (e.g., favorite memory) about this deployment?

I was incredibly fortunate to be partnered with a senior EHO for this mission who was an amazing mentor. This partnership allowed me to serve and learn at the same time. It was also incredible to drive across Texas and Louisiana enroute to my deployment duty station and experience parts of the country that were new to me.

9. What would you consider to be your major accomplishment stemming from this deployment?

Several of our teams were very stressed by the lack of infrastructure in the hospitals where they were stationed. It was very rewarding to work with these teams to alleviate that stress and to help them understand that they could stay safe in their environment and still provide high quality patient care.

10. Were there any classes or trainings that helped you in your deployment?

Hospital ICS (HICS) courses certainly helped during this deployment. Some of the hospitals that responded more successfully to changing needs had already implemented a HICS. Understanding HICS allowed me to more seamlessly understand the situation and begin to contribute immediately upon arrival.

11. How was your post deployment/reintegration experience? Was it a smooth transition back to your daily activities?

It was a smooth transition for me because I am fortunate to have the support of my office while I quarantined post-deployment. Of course, the work that piles up is always daunting by the time I get back!

12. Please feel free to share anything else regarding your deployment to highlight your experiences or to increase the readiness of fellow officers.

13. Do you consent to your narrative being posted in JOAG publications? (y/n)

Yes
No

14. Do you consent to your narrative being posted on JOAG social media sites? (y/n)

Yes
No

Thank you for your service!

Please send your completed form, along with a personal portrait and any other optional approved media for posting (e.g. photos from your deployment)
to
LT Drew Katherine drew.katherine@fda.hhs.gov and LT Brandi Freeman Ponder odg5@cdc.gov