

## ARMY EMERGENCY RELIEF



**AER**

DATE: 11 SEPTEMBER 2020

ASSISTANCE BULLETIN NUMBER: 09-2020

NAME OF DISASTER: WESTERN WILDFIRES

SUBJECT: EVACUATION AND RECOVERY ASSISTANCE FOR SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES IMPACTED BY WILDFIRES IN OREGON, CALIFORNIA AND WASHINGTON STATE

### 1) REFERENCES:

- a. Army Regulation 930-4, dated 5 May 2019
- b. Army Emergency Relief Section Reference Manual (SRM), Chapter 2, dated 15 October 2019

2) **APPLICABILITY:** These instructions apply to Headquarters AER, all Army AER Sections, American Red Cross and Other Military Aid Society Offices in support of eligible Army personnel as depicted in paragraph 4 below.

### 3) PURPOSE:

This AER Bulletin provides guidance for Disaster Assistance (Evacuation and Recovery) for eligible individuals who have been impacted by wildfires in Oregon, California, and Washington State. This guidance also applies to adjacent states by exception. Eligible Army personnel may be provided financial assistance to assist with evacuation and recovery from the devastation of the wildfires. Disaster assistance may be provided for **travel related expenses associated with evacuating from or returning to an evacuated home, basic essential needs to sustain oneself during recovery, and any other essential needs associated with restoration that affect Life, Health or Safety.** Before considering assistance for evacuation and recovery assistance, caseworkers will verify through the local municipality that a mandatory evacuation order and return order have been issued for departure and for return.

### 4. ELIGIBILITY:

The individuals listed below who been impacted by wildfires in Oregon, California and Washington State are eligible for AER Disaster Assistance (Evacuation and Recovery):

- a. Soldiers on **Active Duty** and their eligible Family members.
- b. Soldiers **Retired from Active Duty because of longevity** and their eligible Family members.

- c. **Retired Army Reserve and National Guard** Soldiers receiving retired pay and their Family members.
- d. **Medically Retired** Soldiers and their dependents, including both those placed on the Permanent Disability Retired List (PDRL) or Temporary Disability Retirement List (TDRL).
- e. **Surviving Spouses and Children** of Soldiers who died while on Active Duty (including those on Title 10 Orders) or in an eligible Retired status.
- f. **Members of the Reserve Component** of the Army (National Guard and Army Reserve **under Title 10** U.S.C) on continuous Active Duty **for more than 30 consecutive days** and their eligible Family members.
- g. Title 10, Title 32 and TPU Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers who are **NOT mobilized**.
- h. Title 10, Title 32 and TPU Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers mobilized for **LESS THAN 30 consecutive days**.
- i. Title 10, Title 32 and TPU Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers **activated in support of California and Washington State wildfire relief efforts**.

5. **GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

- a. Assistance for departing and returning to a home will only be considered upon confirmation by the local municipality that it is mandatory to depart and safe to return to the impacted area.
- b. Assistance may be considered for basic essential needs for departure (Food, Fuel, Lodging), basic needs to sustain oneself during recovery and any other essential needs associated with restoration that affect Life, Health or Safety such as Minor Home Repairs.
- c. Caseworkers should review property insurance documents and other related documentation to ensure applicants have submitted applicable claims for property damages. Assistance may be considered for deductibles as necessary to support an insurance claim.
- d. Assistance will be provided as a **Loan, Grant, or combination of both**.
- e. Repayment may be deferred for 90 days.
- f. Repayment of a loan will not exceed 24 months, except when approved by HQ AER.

- g. Loan must be repaid 60 days prior to ETS, end of the reserve commitment or within 24 months after the first scheduled repayment, whichever comes first.
- h. AER Form 57, Budget Planning Sheet (BPS) is required for all assistance requests.
- i. Soldiers who find themselves in a situation where repayment of a loan is causing a financial hardship should contact HQ AER Loan Management Section for further guidance.

## 6. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### a. **HQ AER Assistance Section.**

- 1) Establish Special Event Code (STAT A), “**Western Wildfires 2020**” for assistance request and inform AER Sections, American Red Cross and Other Military Aid Society HQs.
- 2) Establish secure portal instructions for AER Officers to send and receive application information from Leaders, Soldiers, and Families.
- 3) Upon notification by AER Section, review assistance requests and process EFT transactions, as needed ICW HQ AER Accounting Section in a timely manner.
- 4) Provide weekly reports on the number of Soldiers and Families assisted under the established STAT A Code.
- 5) Receive feedback from AER Sections on any procedural improvements that are required.

### b. **HQ AER Accounting Section.**

- 1) Process EFT transactions, as needed in a timely manner upon receipt of signed AER Form 52 (AER check and Promissory Note) and completed AER Form 575, AER Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Form.
- 2) Provide feedback to the Assistance Section of any rejected EFT transactions and reason.

### c. **HQ AER Loan Management Section.**

- 1) Establish repayment schedule IAW AER Form 52 by allotment or EPAY using bank information provided on AER Form 575.
- 2) Ensure repayment ends not later than 24 months after repayment begins or 60-days prior to end of reserve commitment, whichever comes first.
- 3) Contact applicant, chain of command and AER Officer for repayment issues (i.e. account closed, payment disputed, etc.).
- 4) Monitor and report delinquent loan payments by installation to Director, AER.
- 5) Execute collection actions on loans past due 30 plus days.

## 7. **PROCEDURE:**

### a. **Routing of assistance requests:**

- 1) Assistance requests received from Soldiers (**Active Duty, AGR and Title 10 for more than 30 consecutive days**) will follow the existing Direct Access guidelines for assistance case processing. **If eligible for Direct Access, no COC involvement required; if not eligible for Direct Access, COC involvement is required.**
- 2) Assistance requests received from Retired Soldiers, Survivors and eligible Family members will be processed under normal AER application processing guidelines for these respective individuals.
- 3) Assistance requests from **ARNG and USAR** Soldiers will be routed through the **Company Commander or First Sergeant** for review and concurrence.

**b. Soldier or eligible Family Member with Special Power of Attorney (SPOA).**

- 1) Inform Company Commander or First Sergeant as applicable IAW paragraph 7a (1-3) above.
- 2) Electronically forward all required AER application information and the supporting documentation listed in paragraph 8 below to the Unit COC for review, validation and signature, as applicable.

**NOTE: Soldiers who are eligible for Direct Access and a Spouse with Special Power of Attorney (SPOA) should contact the local AER Section for guidance and may forward AER application information directly to the local AER Officer.**

**c. Company Commander or First Sergeant will:**

- 1) Validate a valid financial need exists for evacuation and recovery assistance.
- 2) Review Soldier Leave and Earning Statement (LES) and Spouse income sources (if applicable) in completing the AER Form 57, Budget Planning Sheet (BPS) to determine the overall financial situation.
- 3) If AER assistance is required, verify amount(s) to meet valid financial needs.
- 4) Review property insurance and other related documentation to ensure Soldier has submitted applicable claims for property damages.
- 5) Ensure Soldier completes AER Form 101, Application for Financial Assistance itemizing specific valid needs in block 17.
- 6) **For ARNG and USAR Soldiers not on Title 10 orders for more than 30 consecutive days, certify the Soldier is in “good standing” and has at least 24 months remaining on his/her reserve component commitment. A certifying statement is required to be written in block 23 of AER Form 101.**
- 7) Ensure Soldier completes AER 575, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Form, if applicable.
- 8) Ensure Soldier obtains a Trustee approval letter (if under bankruptcy).
- 9) Ensure Soldier obtains a Special Power of Attorney (AER Form 53 or civilian equivalent) or Allotment Authorization (AER Form 55) when Soldier is not available, and Spouse is requesting assistance on the Soldiers' behalf.
- 10) Contact the nearest Army AER Section, or if within a 50-mile commuting

radius other service Military Aid Society (Air Force, Navy/Marine Corps or Coast Guard) for application processing instructions.

- 11) Forward AER application with supporting documentation listed in paragraph 8 below to the nearest AER Section or Military Aid Society Office for review, evaluation and assistance consideration.
- 12) If outside of a 50-mile commuting radius of any military installation contact the American Red Cross at 1-877-272-7337 and select option 1 for financial assistance. The American Red Cross will provide a secure link to transmit application information listed in paragraph 8 below, conduct case intake on behalf of AER and will forward case information to HQ AER or review, evaluation and assistance consideration / decision.

**NOTE: Unit Leaders, Soldiers and Family members will ensure documents containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII) are only transmitted electronically through a secure means i.e. encrypted email, DoD Safe secure portal or other secure means. A secure link can be requested from the local AER Officer or HQ AER to securely transmit documents containing PII.**

d. **AER Officers.**

- 1) Receive, evaluate and process assistance requests in accordance with these guidelines.
- 2) Ensure widest dissemination of these instructions to Company, Battery and Troop levels at or near their respective Posts, Camps and Stations.
- 3) Provide instructions on how to process AER assistance request(s) electronically in accordance with these guidelines when “face to face” interaction is restricted for AER Staff members.
- 4) When Leaders and Soldiers request a secure link, send secure DoD safe portal links to allow them to **SEND** and **RECEIVE** application data securely.
- 5) Assist Soldiers and Leaders as necessary to validate evacuation and recovery needs.
- 6) Input the following case information in netFORUM:
  - a. Under “*Assistance Details*” select “**Disaster Assistance**” as the request category.
  - b. Enter STAT A Code “**Western Wildfires 2020**”.
- 7) Verify client banking information is correct on AER Form 575 when funds will be disbursed via EFT by HQ AER.
- 8) When EFT support is required in coordination with HQ AER complete the following actions:
  - a. Upload the signed AER Form 575 into the “Case documents” icon in the Assistance Case Profile in netFORUM.
  - b. When uploading multiple documents, ensure AER Form 575 is titled in the following format: “**AER Form 575 - Case ID#**”
  - c. Forward EFT support request to [assistance@aerhq.org](mailto:assistance@aerhq.org) and include the following for all requests:

- i. CASE ID# on the subject line and in the body of the email message.
- ii. The client's preferred email address in the body of the email message.
- iii. Recommended repayment terms in the body of the email message.
- iv. The client's repayment method i.e. Allotment or Supplement Promissory Note.

## 8. MANDATORY DOCUMENTS:

- a. AER Form 101, Application for AER Assistance
- b. AER Form 57, Budget Planning Sheet (BPS)
- c. AER Form 575, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Form, as applicable
- d. Leave and Earning Statement (LES) and other earning statements for the Soldier and Spouse, as applicable.
- e. Documentation to support and validate the financial need, as required.
- f. **ARNG and USAR Soldiers not on Title 10 orders for more than 30 consecutive days will require a certification statement on AER Form 101 (Block 23) from the Company Commander or First Sergeant validating the Soldier is in "good standing" and has at least 24 months remaining on his/her reserve component commitment.**
- g. Trustee approval letter (if under bankruptcy)
- h. Special Power of Attorney (AER Form 53 or civilian equivalent) or Allotment Authorization (AER Form 55) when Soldier is not available.

## 9. This bulletin will remain in effect until 1 November 2020 unless rescinded earlier by HQ AER.

10. The Assistance Section points of contact for this bulletin are SGM(R) Glen Wellman or CSM(R) Charles Durr at (571) 389-7137, extension #1 or by email at [assistance@aerhq.org](mailto:assistance@aerhq.org). The Loan Management Section point of contact is SGM(R) William Hagzan at (571) 389-7137, extension #2 or by email at [repayments-allotments@aerhq.org](mailto:repayments-allotments@aerhq.org).

11. If you require additional guidance during non-business hours, please contact an HQ AER caseworker through the Army Operations Center at 703-697-0218.

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Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer