

STATE OF COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS



STRATEGIC PLAN State Fiscal Year 2014-2015

H. MICHAEL EDWARDS
Major General, Colorado Air National Guard
The Adjutant General and Executive Director

1. Introduction

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is led by Major General H. Michael Edwards. The Department consists of three functionally related distinct divisions which are shown in Figure 1, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Organization:

1. The Division of the National Guard, the federally recognized state military force comprised of approximately 4,000 Army National Guard and 1,500 Air National Guard personnel.
2. The Division of the Civil Air Patrol consisting of one state employee to provide support to the nearly 2,100 volunteer members of the Colorado Wing of the Civil Air Patrol.
3. The Division of the Veterans Affairs which consists of State Veterans Service Officers and the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado. The Division supports the Board of Veterans Affairs, a seven-member board appointed by the Governor and reporting to the Governor and General Assembly as a Type II Board through the Adjutant General.

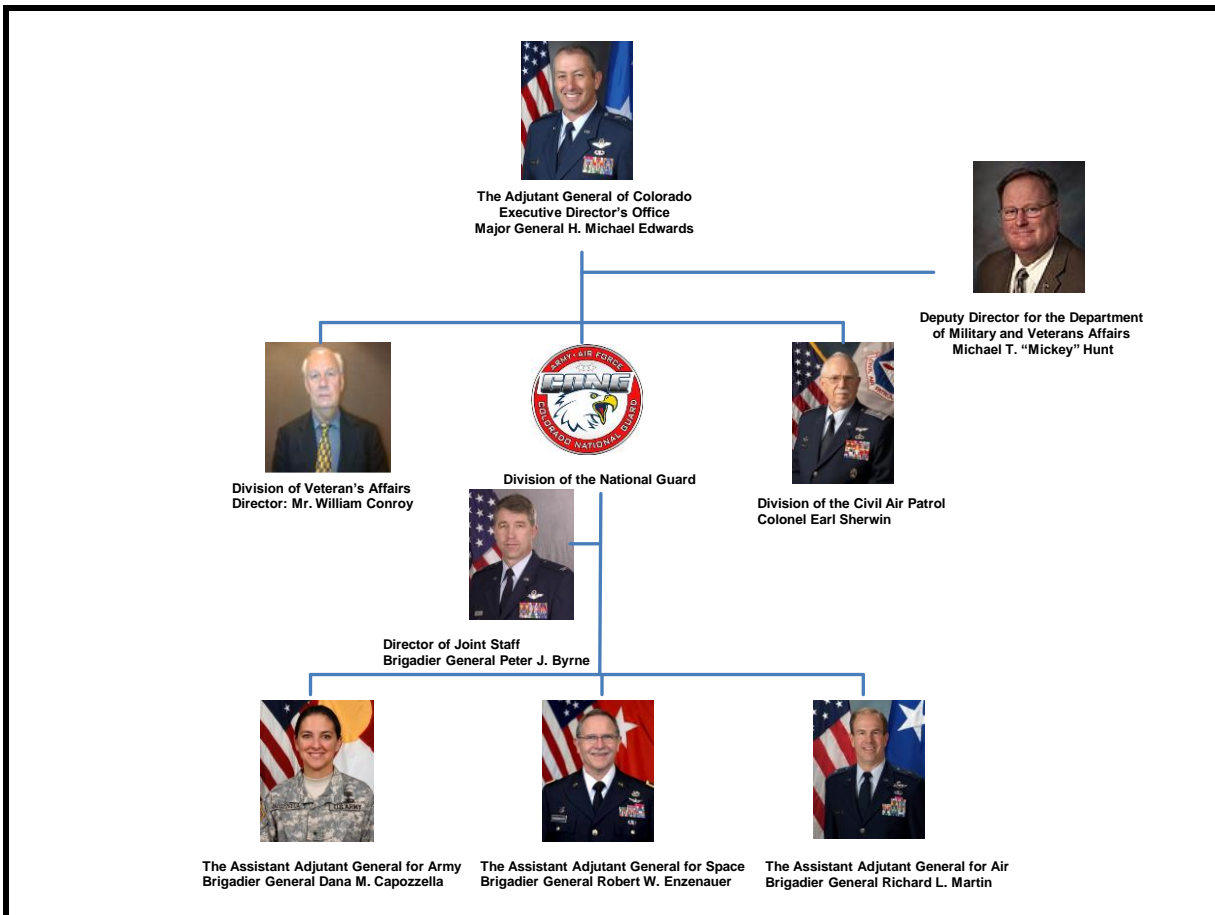


Figure 1: Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Organization

Major General H. Michael Edwards is The Adjutant General for Colorado. He is responsible for the command administration of over 5,500 Colorado Army and Air National Guard members. Major General Edwards also serves as the Executive Director of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and is a member of the Governor's cabinet. He has responsibility for the Colorado National Guard's primary missions of national defense and state emergency response.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs mission, vision, and values statements are:

Mission Statement: To provide guidance, support, and legislative coordination to the divisions of the Colorado National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Veterans Affairs enabling the divisions to assist Colorado's Veteran Community; and to provide ready forces at home or abroad, protecting the citizens and property of Colorado and the United States of America.

Vision statement: To enhance Department of Military and Veterans Affairs capabilities and efficiency providing Colorado a high value organization, fully engaged with our communities, staged for the growing needs of our divisions and State through 2030 and beyond.

Values: Trust, Teamwork, and Cooperation

Our values foster a work environment that attracts individuals with personal courage and retains the highest quality people possible. Our values are accomplished by:

- An open set of systems that promote trust performance agreements, promotions, and retention of the highest quality employees
- An operating style that promotes teamwork: Everyone works together to accomplish the mission
- Teams cooperating to satisfy our customers: Metrics driven improvements and results

The Adjutant General's priorities for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs are the safety and health of our people, strength, readiness, customer focus and environmental stewardship of our Colorado cultural and natural resources.

As the Department moves ahead through the next five years, the needs of the three Department of Veterans Affairs divisions are fairly clear. Within the National Guard, facility improvement is the primary focus. In Veterans Affairs, the growing health needs of an aging veterans' population and the needs of the new generation of veterans from the Global War on Terrorism will be a focus. The Civil Air Patrol will focus on training and maintaining its membership to ensure adequate emergency services capability.

The Division of the National Guard (Division 1)

The Colorado National Guard is authorized and governed by Article 3, Title 28 of the Colorado Revised Statutes and Article 3, Title 32 of the United States Code. The Colorado National Guard is constituted as both a State and Federal force by authority of the National Defense Act approved June 3, 1916. The National Guard is a reserve component of the Army of the United States and the United States Air Force. In time of peace, the National Guard is a State

force, controlled by the Adjutant General as the principal military representative of the Commander-in-Chief, the Governor. The Governor has the authority to order the Colorado National Guard into the active service of the State and to cause them to perform duty such as he shall deem proper. The National Guard is equipped and paid by the Federal Government and must meet organizational and training standards to qualify for Federal recognition. When U.S. Congress declares a national emergency or in time of war and authorizes the use of armed force requiring troops in excess of those in the Active Forces, the President of the United States may order the National Guard into the active military service of the United States.

The Division of Civil Air Patrol (Division 2)

Division of Civil Air Patrol is authorized and governed by Article 1, Title 28 Colorado Revised Statutes. The Division provides support for the operation of the Colorado Wing, Civil Air Patrol. The Wing is comprised of 32 squadrons across Colorado. There are three types of squadrons: Cadet, Composite, and Senior. Cadet squadrons are comprised primarily of youth and young adults ages 12 to 21, with senior members (adults) in supervisory, administrative, and training roles. Composite squadrons, the most common type, conduct both cadet and senior member programs. Senior squadrons are made up exclusively of members age 18 and over. Wing membership is divided almost evenly between cadet and senior members.

The Division of Veterans Affairs (Division 3)

The Division of Veterans Affairs is authorized and governed by Chapter 3, Title 38, United States Code (Veterans). The Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs is the state agency that is mandated by state statute to assist veterans and their family members and survivors in securing any benefits they may be entitled to because of service in the military. The Division does this by serving as a central source of information on veterans' benefits, rights and issues; and by training, directing and assisting the county veterans' service officers who are the local veterans' assistance agencies in every county in Colorado.

The Division of Veterans Affairs serves as the "hub" of a network of 78 county Veterans Service Officers in 64 counties and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs who monitor and support the activities of the County Veterans Service Officers. They provide training, certification and technical support for County Veterans Service Officers who then assist veterans in the counties to obtain benefits they have earned from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. The network thus has responsibility for providing claim support services to the over 427,000 veterans, registered with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs residing in the State of Colorado. The division currently has 10 fulltime employees.

2. Major Program Areas

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has five major program areas associated with its divisions. There are three under the division of the National Guard, and one each for the Civil Air Patrol and the Department of Veterans Affairs. These are National Guard Federal, National Guard State, National Guard Family, Civil Air Patrol, and Veterans Affairs.

- National Guard Federal program encompasses activities to provide the Federal Government with a trained and ready National Guard force for execution of assigned federal missions based on the National Military Strategy.

These programs are primarily federally funded and provide for both Coloradoans and all Americans by contributing to national security through force projection. The Colorado National Guard is distributed in fifteen counties across the state.

- National Guard State program encompasses activities to provide the Governor a trained and ready National Guard force able to conduct National Guard Civil Support within Colorado and Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VIII as required.

These programs are primarily federally funded until called to duty by the Governor and provide for Coloradoans and all Americans by responding to natural and manmade disasters. The Colorado National Guard is distributed across the state in fifteen counties.

- National Guard Family program encompasses activities to meet the needs of our citizen Soldiers, Airmen, and their Families outside traditional military channels.

This program serves members of the National Guard and their families. The program is federally funded and has members collocated with readiness centers across the state.

- Civil Air Patrol program encompasses activities to provide the Governor a trained and ready force to conduct emergency services missions.

This program is primarily federally funded and provides for both Coloradoans and all Americans by providing first response and search and rescue capabilities operating independently or in coordination with other rescue efforts. The Civil Air Patrol is located across the state.

- Veterans Affairs program encompasses activities to assist veterans, their family members, and survivors in securing benefits provided for prior service in the military.

These programs are state funded with additional resources to County Veterans Service Officers being provided by the counties in which they operate. State veterans service employees are located in Denver, Jefferson, and Mesa Counties with associated County Veterans Service Officers operating in counties across the State.

3. Strategic Policy Initiatives

Strategic Policy Initiative 1 – Improve Disaster Response Coordination

Recent trends indicate a growing reliance on the domestic response capability of the Colorado National Guard within the State. A significant increase in State Active Duty call-ups during the past two summers in response to unprecedented fire and flood activity is indicative of a pattern that will likely continue. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has proven resilient in the face of adversity and capable of meeting these challenges. From dramatic rescues and highly publicized support to devastated communities to unseen efforts like processing hundreds of Guardsmen into the state payroll system and paying them on time, the Department has faced unique and original problems.

It is the goal of the Department to learn from these experiences and constantly update the response provided to the state in such a way that is both proactive and generates greater coordination and cooperation with intra-State agencies as well as local and national partners.

One Year Goal: Translate lessons learned from both fire and flood response missions into policies and procedures which improve the speed at which the Department can respond in coordination with other response partners. This will include ensuring that the appropriate tools and the means to distribute them are available.

This goal will be achieved by conducting after action reviews in coordination with partner agencies to capture lessons learned and further improve coordination.

Three Year Goal: Incorporate the lessons learned into a state response manual that covers those disasters most commonly dealt with in Colorado (i.e. fire, flood, tornado) in coordination with other state response agencies.

This goal will be achieved by compiling captured lessons learned into a state response manual that will be available all partner agencies, ensuring best practices are maintained despite personnel turnover.

Strategic Policy Initiative 2 – Expand Services Provided to Underserved Veterans Through Planning

Serving Colorado's veterans remains a cornerstone of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs' efforts. Rural and student veterans stand out as being underserved within the state. Access to support services and peer-specific community is a problem for both groups. The preponderance of resources, including hospitals, support groups, student veteran chapters and veterans cemeteries are located along the I-25 corridor.

The Department seeks to update and improve those services it provides beyond this corridor. These consist primarily of grants and the Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Grand Junction, CO. By providing grants which support transportation for veterans to appointments and counseling

services, both the Veterans Trust Fund and the Veterans Assistance Grant provide support veterans across the state. The Veterans Memorial Cemetery provides a service that would otherwise be geographically unavailable to veterans who live on the Western Slope.

One Year Goal: The Department seeks to improve coordination across strata of government and non-profit support to veterans by creating a state-wide strategic plan in coordination with SAMHSA.

This goal will be accomplished by participating in the SAMHSA working group and creating a state-wide plan that engages stakeholders.

Three Year Goal: Increase the focus of the Veterans Trust Fund and the Veterans Assistance Grant to the support of student veterans and those who live in rural areas. Provide for greater access to programs by supporting rural and campus distribution and/or supporting transport options to existing programs in high-density population centers.

This goal will be accomplished by improving and measuring the focus on granting Veterans Trust Funds to rural transportation initiatives and working with existing VSO infrastructure to reach new generations of veterans. The latter will also be grant funded.