

Employers Guide: Support Your EMS Practitioner Deploying for Combat

As an EMS leader with employees in the military, your support and assistance for your deploying employees is critical. Deployments may last a year or more and require you to adjust your staffing and provide services with decreased staffing levels or shift duties among your crews. You've spent money training this employee and you want him or her back safely and ready to work as a valuable member of your organization following deployment.

You can help. The National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) is offering some tips to help you through the process of getting your veteran back on board as a valued employee of your organization.

Before Deployment

- Review the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) – See www.esgr.mil.
- Review your department's veteran policy and discuss it with your deploying employee.
- Review the projected deployment timeline with your employee.
- Discuss changes in your employee's benefits and compensation and provide a summary of changes in writing.
- Discuss the promotion process within your organization with your deploying employee.
- Update the emergency contact list with the employee and his or her family.
- Discuss the department's expectations for return to work and reintegration, including licensing and qualification issues.
- Learn about your deploying employee's military obligations for pre-deployment and post-deployment commitments; some departments offer deploying employees flextime so they can spend more time with their families before they leave.
- Designate a point of contact for the deploying employee's family.
- Encourage the employee and assure him or her that your organization will look out for his or her family and offer support during deployment.

During Deployment

- Stay in touch with the deployed employee with regular communication. If possible, send newsletters, policy changes, and new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)/Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) via e-mail or care packages.
- Stay in touch with the employee's family and offer help if needed, especially child care breaks or home repairs, if possible.
- Offer continuing medical education opportunities, refresher courses, and other education during the deployment via correspondence and online, if available.
- Stay in touch with your licensing agency and the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) to let them know your employee is deployed, if applicable.
- Send your employee holiday cards, pictures of new rigs, and photos of new employees to keep him or her in the loop and make him or her feel like part of the department.
- Encourage your employee and assure him or her that he or she will have a place there after returning home.

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After Deployment

- Remember that your veteran is readjusting to family, work, and friends; YOU are readjusting to having him or her back at work.
- Allow your veteran to take time off as allowed by law when he or she returns.
- Welcome the veteran home with a breakfast or lunch celebration to thank the veteran for his or her service on behalf of a grateful nation.
- Sit down and talk with your veteran before he or she returns to work to talk about any new skills they acquired during the deployment; maximize the use of those skills in department training if appropriate.
- Adhere to stated veterans policies and expectations discussed before the deployment.
- Discuss transition timing with your veteran and tailor a reintegration program to the individual; it is integral for success.
- Schedule a physical if required before return to duty.
- Update the veteran on department changes, new SOPs/SOGs and new resources that were implemented during the deployment.
- Assist your veteran with any licensing issues needing attention to return to full duty.
- Encourage thoughtful feedback from support system personnel so early intervention can mitigate problems.
- Allow time to ensure treatment and healing for any injuries sustained during your veteran's deployment; this includes Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and wounds that can't be seen by others.
- Transition time depends on many factors including time of deployment, duties during deployment, and any injuries sustained during the deployment; remember that each veteran is an individual and different timelines may be needed for successful reintegration.

All officers and staff in your department can benefit from understanding veterans issues and the impact employee deployment may have on the department. Remember that most people at home – your veteran's family, his or her fellow employees, and most citizens – cannot imagine what the veteran has experienced and been through. Find a veteran, find a member of the unit, or call one of the resources listed on www.naemt.org to talk if your veteran is having trouble dealing with post-deployment life.

There are many of us, just like your veteran. As Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "America's citizens are doing our bidding – we owe them a caring system when they return."

View helpful resource links at www.naemt.org.