

Soldiers get feet wet in training session

By Staff Sgt. Joe Donnelly, 444MPAD

With 70 percent of the earth covered in water you would think that every state National Guard unit would have its own water treatment unit.

However, until the fall of 2006 the New Jersey Army National Guard was without a unit that could provide this staple of life.

A group of volunteers brought more than 100 years of civilian expertise in all things wet to the National Guard Training Center at Sea Girt to give the Soldiers of the 154th Water Treatment Company a head start in the training.



Michael Furrey (left), Operating License Instructor for the New Jersey Water Association explains checking for water quality to Soldiers of the 154th Water purification and Distribution Company at Sea Girt. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kryn P. Westhoven, 444tMPAD.

In the first of two weekend sessions, members of the New Jersey Water Association, (NJWA) based in Waretown donated their time to educating members of the new unit.

"These folks are our neighbors and they are protecting us so we are doing what we can to help them," said Rick Howlett, NJWA Executive Director.

Many of the 154th's Soldiers came from the Signal Battalion who originally "worked on phone lines and radios but now they are working with water," said Command Sgt. Maj. Howard Wright, 50th Finance Battalion, whose civilian field is related to water treatment.

Because the unit is in its infancy stage many of the troops are waiting to attend the 13-week course at Fort Lee, Va., to become MOS-qualified. In the meantime Soldiers are receiving "basics water operations skill", said Capt. Malinda Dake, Commander, 154th Water Treatment Company.

The training by the civilian experts was a real "eye opener" for the future Water Treatment Specialists noted Dake.

"Soldiers will come away knowing what they are getting their hands into."

"The training is in basic water sources, water treatment, water quality and safety," said Howlett, explaining the goals of the classroom lessons.

This water education weekend was delivered by five volunteer instructors who are no strangers to teaching as they have traveled the state instructing Public Health Officials, License Water and Waste Operators and Public Works managers.

The jump start that trainees received from the civilian experts will not only help them in preparing for their new military jobs but help every one that comes in contact with their finished product, H₂O. Soon you will hear call that the water is fine, drink up.

ROWPU - The Army's Water Prime Mover

Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units (ROWPU), use raw water taken from rivers, oceans, lagoons or any other water source and puts it through four different filtration processes. The filtered water is then treated with chlorine to sterilize it in the final stage of purification before it is piped to storage containers for Soldiers' use.