

119 CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

119 Civil Engineering Flight
119 Civil Engineer Squadron

STATIONS

Fargo, ND

ASSIGNMENTS

119 Mission Support Group

COMMANDERS

Maj Robert R. Boone, #1977
LTC Ronald W. Solberg, 2000
LTC Jon Wahlgren, # 2012

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

119th Civil Engineering Flight is a subordinate the Combat Support Squadron.

As Hector International Airport expanded, the mission of the N.D. Air National Guard's 119th Wing firefighters grew. Now, 56 years after the original building went up to handle aircraft emergencies in Fargo, a new Crash/Fire/Rescue building is ready to meet challenges into the future. Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, North Dakota adjutant general, Col. Rick Gibney, 119th Wing commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Mark Solem, 119th Wing fire chief, led a dedication ceremony Aug. 31 to officially open the new \$6.5 million building, which was funded by the U.S. Air Force. Also speaking were Sen. John Hoeven, Congressman Rick Berg and Retired Maj.

Gen. Alexander Macdonald. "Our mission in the N.D. National Guard is to protect lives and property," Sprynczynatyk said. "That can be accomplished in many ways on a global scale and here at home. With regard to this new building, we're taking a big step forward in continuing to fulfill that mission in Fargo on a daily basis. By more than doubling the building size and positioning it more strategically for airport expansion, we are ready to assist Hector Field with emergencies for many years into the future."

The former fire hall spanned just 10,700 square feet, making it impossible to store all of the equipment required for a force of that size inside, which became particularly challenging during winter months. At 22,400 square feet, the new building has 13 bays to house all of the station's equipment, from a foam trailer for fuel fires to a vacuum trailer for fuel spills, as well as equipment needed for confined space extraction and the necessary safety equipment and breathing apparatuses for the firefighters.

There are 10 sleeping rooms, a gym and a kitchen for the firefighters, 29 of which work full-time with others serving as traditional Airmen. "As commander of the base, I can't tell you how proud I am and how grateful I am to the people that made this magnificent, world-class facility possible," Gibney said. "To me, the profession of firefighting is one of the most noble, most respected professions in today's society." The building also achieves high environmental standards, and is expected to be certified LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver by the U.S. Green Building Council.

It uses high standards in both lighting and geothermal energy, as well as rainwater collection for irrigation. Beyond the structure, the building's location is instrumental to the department's response. The 119th Wing handles all aircraft emergencies, both civilian and military, at Hector. The location of the 1950s-era building to the south made it difficult to reach some locations of the airport — which is larger now than it was then — in the time allotted for proper response. Now, firefighters can respond from the new building to the entire airport in less time, and will be able to continue to do so should the airport grow. Additional space also is available to expand the fire hall building in the future, should it be needed.

The windchill buckled into the single digits in mid-December when about 50 N.D. Air National Guard members boarded a C-9 in Fargo. Within 48 hours, they would be in their temporary home in Southwest Asia, where the temperature was peaking around 70 degrees. About 10 more Airmen joined them a week later for the six-month-long mission. It's an unusual mission for the Happy Hooligans, who typically deploy overseas individually or in small groups. "We do things a little differently in the Army versus the Air (Force), but in both instances whenever

we're sending off our Airmen and our Soldiers, this is our opportunity to thank you for what you do, wish you well in the coming months in terms of the mission, and most importantly, show our support for you, both the Airmen and the family members, as members of the N.D. National Guard," Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, N.D. adjutant general, told the Airmen and their Families before they left. Col. Rick Gibney, 119th Wing commander, referred to the mission as "a very busy deployment at a very historic time in our nation's history."

"The tough job isn't for us who go forward to the theater; the tough job is for the folks who stay back," he added. "When we go overseas, the schedule is pretty routine, we get into a rhythm of things. The hard part is for the family members left back." The Guardsmen serve in the 119th Wing's Civil Engineer Squadron and are skilled in construction trades. Many have previously deployed, including Maj. Jon Wahlgren, the group's commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Scott Terry, the senior enlisted leader. "We should stay pretty busy maintaining not only hard buildings, but tentage," said Terry, who is deployed with his nephew, Senior Airman Tony Rezac. "... There's no doubt in my military mind that we'll pull this off in a great fashion." Two sets of brothers and two sets of uncles and nephews are deployed together within the small group. Tech. Sgt. Tracy Winterquist and his brother, Staff Sgt. Travis Winterquist, live on the same street in Argusville with their wives and children. Both are third generation Happy Hooligans.

"Having a family member there is kind of nice, but it does actually make it a little bit harder because when I'm gone the person I would look to for snow removal, maybe help around my house, will be a couple doors down. ... It's good for me over there, but for being back here it makes it more difficult," Tracy said. Leaving so soon before many would observe holidays poses an extra challenge for military Families, some of whom celebrated early. Others are holding out for a summer celebration after their Airman's return. "Actually knowing that Steve is going over and there's Soldiers coming home to have Christmas with their Families makes our Christmas a little more special," said Bridget Schwartz, whose husband, Master Sgt. Steve Schwartz, is deployed 2012

Air Force Unit Histories

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.