



Participants in a Boss Lift program in Oklahoma enjoyed riding along on a KC-135 Stratotanker as it refueled other jets over Florida.



Photo courtesy ES&R

‘Boss Lifts’ Give Employers a Taste of Military Life

Civilians See Base Life Up Close, Try Out Simulators and Get a Ride to Remember

By Ray Luppe

ALL across America, employers of Reservists and National Guard members are getting a taste of what their employees go through at their “other jobs.”

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve committees across the country stage events for employers called “Boss Lifts.”

Civilian supervisors get to see firsthand how their employees work and train as citizen-soldiers in Reserve or National Guard units. Some Boss Lifts are one-day events and others are two to three days in length.

The Pennsylvania ESGR Committee puts on a three-day annual Boss Lift held at Fort Indiantown Gap (FIG), home to the Headquarters of the Pennsylvania National Guard, but

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units from many states come to FIG to take advantage of its great training sites.

Situated northeast of the state capitol of Harrisburg, this post includes comprehensive training sites for the type of employer education the committee hopes to accomplish.

These bosses get an early start on their day. Thirty employers are up and out the door by 0730. They gathered at a central location and received briefings on what they will experience during their time at Boss Lift.

ESGR Committee leaders and the State Adjutant General Major General Jessica Wright welcomed employers to the event. The orientation included a video that tells about the PA Army and Air National Guard and its proud history in support of our nation. Then it is on to the bus to one of many destinations on the fort.

As part of training, state-of-the-art simulators give soldiers the experience of operating a tank, a Humvee, or a number of different individual and crew-served weapons to improve their marksmanship skills without the cost of ammunition or equipment wear. Employers who attended the Pennsylvania Boss Lift got to try out these simulators and talk with soldiers and the technicians who keep the equipment up and running.

During their Boss Lift at FIG, they got to see what it is like to view the world through night vision goggles. They explored such equipment as an M-3 Bradley fighting vehicle, and a 70-ton M1-A1 Abrams tank and the new Stryker vehicle.

On day two they visited a maintenance hanger to see Blackhawk and other types of helicopters being serviced. Employers got the thrill of "flying" a Chinook helicopter as they climbed into the cockpit of the simulator and took the controls. Briefings by pilots, and non-commissioned officers were interspersed between the many stops

on this tour.

The highlight of the visit to the flight facility is the real, not simulated, ride in a Chinook helicopter. After a safety briefing and distribution of hearing protection, it is time to board. The helicopter flight lasts about 30 minutes, flying over farms, forest, and towns before returning. For some, the flight takes them back to the day when they were in uniform.

For the non-veteran employers, the flight is one of wonder and many photographs through the windows or out the open back hatch, where a crew member sits taking in the view when not responding to directions from the pilot. And then, all too soon, the Chinook is back on the ground and the employers are excitedly talking among themselves and the air crew about the experience.



Photo courtesy ESGR

Civilian employers observed other jets refuel from a KC-135 Stratotanker during a Boss Lift program in Oklahoma.

Bring Bosses to the Show

National Guard and Reserve service members historically invite their civilian employers to spend time at their military duty location to familiarize them with their employees' military duties. A typical "Boss Lift" includes a ride in a military vehicle or aircraft, a visit to a shooting range, or maybe even a visit to a military museum.

But Reservists and Guard members will have something different to show their employers during the 2009 U.S. Army Soldier Show's national tour, as members of the Guard and Reserve are being encouraged to attend the show and bring their civilian employers through the outreach of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

"Guard and Reserve members should consider their employers as strategic partners who support their efforts to serve our nation," said Navy Capt. Ted Fessel, director of national operations and plans for the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. "The show is exciting and patriotic, and is a great way to educate employers about the military culture."

The Soldier Show is a high-energy musical revue with a cast composed entirely of Army personnel from the active duty, Army Reserve and Army National Guard. The cast is under the direction of a team of entertainment professionals, many with years of experience on Broadway.

The show tours the United States through mid-November. All shows are free and open to the public.

For details, visit: http://new.armymwr.com/recreation/entertainment/soldiershow/tour_schedule.aspx



U.S. Army photo

Officials with the Defense Department's Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve group are encouraging reserve-component service members to bring their civilian employers to see the 2009 U.S. Army Soldier Show.

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Gary Schelske

Farmers Union Insurance

Pennsylvania's Boss Lift is only one of dozens of employer-oriented events around the country.

- In Oklahoma, the State ESGR Committee arranged for employers to take a ride on a KC-135 Stratotanker, the primary refueling plane of our nation's Air Force. This flight carried employers on a three-hour round trip to refuel F-16 fighter aircraft over Florida. The planes were at 20,000 feet and just 30 feet apart as the refueling took place.

Employers watched this intricate operation while next to the boom operator in the tail of the tanker, a modified Boeing 707.

- In South Dakota employers gathered at the Sioux Falls National Guard Air Field and fly to Fort Hood, Texas, to see where their citizen-soldier employees work.

They saw where the soldiers live, eat and train. Employers observed the leadership skills that citizen-soldiers gain from their training. And they understood how these skills will translate well when carried over to their civilian jobs.

"Going down to see what they do makes it real," said Gary Schelske of Farmers Union Insurance in Menno. "You understand exactly what these guys are doing while they're away."

- In Virginia, Fort Pickett is the site for that state's Boss Lift. In March, employers got to handle the weapons and learn about the training of the 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment of the Virginia Army National Guard.

- In Minnesota, C-130 military transport aircraft carried 160 people to Boise, Idaho, on that state's recent Boss Lift. The planes converged at Gowen Field, the home to the 116th Cavalry, Army National Guard. Also on base is the Idaho Air National Guard, Marine Corps and Navy Reserve. There they learned about the Air Guard's 183rd Wing of Apache attack helicopters and of the 168th Air Wing Detachment of Blackhawk utility helicopters that served in Kuwait.

- In New London, Connecticut, the Coast Guard Reserve took employers out to sea in June, 2008, to give them a feel for the real thing. They each got to take a turn at the helm of the vessel as the CG reservists went out on patrol. As Salvatore Neri, an employer from New London put it, this experience "Opened up my eyes to a lot of different stuff that they do."

An ESGR Boss Lift takes many forms across the country; be it by land, sea, or air. But it is always an eye opener.

"The Boss Lift is one of the best things we do at ESGR," said Don Kelpin, ESGR state chairman. "It's a win-win situation for the Guardsmen, the employers and ESGR."

