



Keeping the beat alive

Prime Power units weather storms to keep critical facilities up, running
“We are the only active-duty battalion within the USACE (United States Army Corps of Engineers) whose job is to provide electrical power as well as electrical expertise.”

—Capt. Gregory Daniel

Company B 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power)

by Lucille Anne Newman

Paraglide

As a storm hits an area, power to the local hospital shuts off and the emergency back-up generator can only power so much.

When a storm or incident cuts off an entire area, the balance of modern day living hangs by a thread.

The 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) is a versatile power generating battalion assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

They are capable of providing commercial-level power to those in need worldwide.

“We are the only active-duty battalion within the USACE (United States Army Corps of Engineers) whose job is to provide electrical power as well as electrical expertise,” said Capt. Gregory Daniel, Company B, 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power).

Other services provided by the unit include power production, transformer inspection and test analysis, maintenance and repair of power plants, substations and government owned or managed transmission and distribution systems to name a few.

Daniel said the unit also works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to bring power to key elements of disaster relief such as hospitals, fire and police departments, homes for the elderly and other facilities that need emergency power.

The battalion is unique in that the Soldiers in this unit are not assigned to the 249th Eng. Bn., upon graduating from Advanced Individual Training, making it difficult for the unit to recruit needed Soldiers.

However, they do provide training at the unit’s Prime Power School for interested Soldiers.

The Prime Power School graduates the Army’s Prime Power production specialist (military occupational specialty 21P) following a one-year course that includes math, physics, engineering and power plant operations and maintenance.

According to Sgt. Anthony Constantino, it doesn’t matter what a Soldier’s current MOS is, they go through an application process and once accepted, the Soldiers will be sent to Fort Belvoir, Va., for a yearlong course of intensive electrical training and to in process.

“If you’re looking for an MOS that is very compatible to outside employment market, this is probably the best one,” Constantino said. “Because electricity will never go away, there is always going to be an agency that will need the power these guys can provide. Power is everything.”

Constantino and Daniels explained that interested Soldiers can join the team through the bonus extension and retraining reenlistment program.

Constantino explained that the training is constant but the job is rewarding.

“There is no going off to Sicily (Drop Zone) or Camp Mackall to put on face paint and play games,” he said and explained that for them to train it has to be conducted as if it were a real world mission. “This is a very dangerous job, but we also do a lot of cool stuff.”

This unit is probably the only unit I’ve been in that gives back to the community and you can’t get anything more gratifying than that.

When (American) citizens come up to us just to say “thank you” ... it’s very rewarding.”

Currently, Co. B is one of three units within 249th Eng. Bn., not including the school or platoons. It consists of a company headquarters and two prime power platoons at Fort Lewis, Wash., two active component platoons at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii which will soon be consolidated at Schofield Barracks. Co. B is located at Fort Bragg and within this year a Co. C is scheduled for activation at Fort Belvoir, Va., and Co. D, an allreserve component, is scheduled to activate in Providence, R.I.

graphic and photo illustrations by Mark Weckman/Paraglide



Powered by TECNAVIA

Copyright (c) 2008 Paraglide 09/04/2008