

Operation Bosslift: About Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve

By Melissa Regennitter Of the Muscatine Journal (July 16, 2007)

MUSCATINE, Iowa — Local business professionals received first-hand experience in what their fellow employees who serve in the U.S. Army National Guard or Reserve face during training. The group attended a Bosslift seminar held by the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

The event, held July 12 and 13, brought the employers to the Camp Ripley training center in Minnesota where they were able to interact with soldiers, participate in hands-on drills and network with the ESGR during the two week training session for National Guard Members.

According to its Web site, the ESGR is a U.S. Department of Defense organization. It is a staff group within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, which is a part of the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

ESGR was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve component members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment.

Employers are able to participate in Bosslifts or obtain other ESGR services for free.

ESGR operates through a network of hundreds of volunteers throughout the nation and Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Europe.

In Iowa, there are only three paid volunteers in the organization but several hundred volunteer businesses, civic, academic, and military leaders serve ESGR throughout the state.

Greg Monroe, an employee of Grain Processing Corp., and Roger Roskens, retired Louisa-Muscatine School principal, both non-paid volunteers for the ESGR, were along for the trip and assisted in recruiting employers to join the program.

This was Roskens' first trip, but Monroe has been involved since 2005.

Monroe, ESGR committee member, said the program is vital in educating employers and building relationships and better understanding of the vital role Iowa National Guard soldiers play. A business might feel as though it will run the risk of becoming short-handed by employing a National Guard member or Reservist who will need two weeks off for training each year and could potentially be deployed to full military status at any time. The program helps build on the necessity of employee support and encouragement in such situations.

The ESGR also:

- Encourages and assists employee participation in National Guard and Reserve training programs, and on military duty without civilian job impediments of any kind, to include encouraging voluntary compliance with federal and state statutes governing employment and reemployment rights of Reserve component members.
- Encourages interaction between National Guard and Reserve units and their communities to promote public understanding of the National Guard and Reserve and encourage partnerships between civilian organizations and military units in the community.
- Assist in preventing, resolving, or reducing employer or employee problems and misunderstandings that result from National Guard or Reserve membership, training, or duty requirements through information services and informal mediation.
- Assists in educating National Guard and Reserve members regarding their obligations and responsibilities to employers. Members of the Armed Forces are obligated to give their employers notice and the employers are equally obligated to allow employees to fulfill military duties and deployment requirements under the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.
- Recruit volunteer leaders at the national and local levels.
- Conducts both proactive and reactive services in support of the organization's strategic goals.

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