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EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF OUR RESERVE

Hurricane Katrina rescue and recovery operations provide yet another example of how much we rely on our Reserves. One group of vital, yet often overlooked, partners in our extended use of Reservists are their civilian employers. The increased mobilization of Reservists since September 11, 2001, significantly impacts full-time employers and home-town communities. I encourage all units with Reservists to reach out to local employers to express appreciation for their contribution to this invaluable partnership and to promote how important Reservists are to the Coast Guard. Informed employers are more likely to support their Reserve employees through policies and practices that accommodate participation in our demanding operations tempo.

The National Committee of Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is the DoD agency responsible for fostering communications and understanding between the Reserve Components and their civilian employers. ESGR offers a number of services, including assistance in local outreach. A variety of informational materials are available at the ESGR website (www.esgr.org) or by calling 1-800-336-4590 and asking for an employer outreach specialist. The Coast Guard's POC at ESGR is CAPT Ron White, USCGR (Ronald.White@osd.mil). ESGR's cadre of volunteers in all states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, will also help units develop a dialogue with employers.

One excellent example of an effective employer support program is that of the FY04 Sparks Award winner, MSO Houston-Galveston. The unit hosted a one-day event and participated in two ESGR Bosslifts to express thanks to the regional companies that employ Coast Guard men and women. By showcasing unit missions, particularly the key role of Reservists, they enhanced public understanding of our vast responsibilities.

An informed, regular contact program takes effort, but is well worth the good will and open communications it generates. Employers need to know that their strong support of our Reservists is essential to our success and to the nation's maritime safety and security.

Regards,

RADM Kenneth J. Venuto
Ken Venuto

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