

# Soldier Systems Center SPOTLIGHT

Issue 14

January 2025



U.S. ARMY





# A Brief Word

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Greetings, Team Natick!

As we return to work after the Holiday break, I wanted to take the opportunity to say I hope everyone had a moment to catch their breath, spend time with loved ones, and enjoy some relaxation.

While work resumes, I encourage everyone to take a moment to reflect on what's truly important as leaders and members of a team. A smart person once said, "leadership is not about being in charge, it's about taking care of those in your charge. It's about putting the needs of your team members first, listening to their concerns, and empowering them to succeed".

Day-to-day tasks and responsibilities often take all of our focus, and we forget to check on those to our left and right and those in our charge. I encourage everyone to check on each other and ensure that our team members are accounted for and are having their needs met. Caring for the team is how we create an environment where our team members feel valued, supported, and encouraged to grow, and this is how you build a positive climate.

So, as the new year begins, I challenge each of you to focus on the people. Take the time to get to know your team members, to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and to help them achieve their goals. Be approachable, be empathetic, and be willing to lend a helping hand

Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Kelley  
U.S. Army Garrison Natick Command Sergeant Major



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# Upcoming Events & Opportunities

## January

- 1 / 9 - National Day of Mourning for President Carter
- 1 / 15 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day Observance w/special guest speaker  
*11:00 a.m. - Hunter Auditorium, Carney Hall*
- 1 / 20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
- 1 / 29 - Hygge Series - Tea + Cocoa  
*12:00 - 1:00 p.m. - Carney Hall Cafe*

## Martin Luther King Jr. Observance Special Guest Speaker



### **Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Paul Minor**

BG Minor served as the Assistant Adjutant General (Army) for the Massachusetts National Guard, advising on priorities such as investing in people, building enduring partnerships, and fostering innovation. A decorated chaplain and accomplished academic, he has over 25 years of service, including deployments to Kuwait and Guantanamo Bay. BG Minor has co-chaired diversity and innovation initiatives, earning a reputation as a visionary leader. With multiple advanced degrees and a passion for cultivating purpose-driven workplaces, he is an inspiring voice you won't want to miss!

### **Health and Wellness Corner**

The NSSC Health & Wellness Council continues to host monthly Mindfulness Community Practice sessions. The next gathering will be offered online Thursday, January 23 from 1 - 1:30 p.m.. These sessions are beginner-friendly, with 20 minutes of guided instruction and can be incorporated into daily life. If you've been telling yourself you want to try meditation and haven't had a chance or you want to deepen your practice, this is an opportunity to drop-in. All experience levels welcome! For more information, contact Ellen Merrill, email: [ellen.p.merrill.civ@army.mil](mailto:ellen.p.merrill.civ@army.mil)







# MWR Resources

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At Natick Family and MWR, we strive to continuously improve the quality and ease of access to MWR services and information. When planning your next event, please visit our website where you can easily request rental equipment, request dates for facility use, or send a message to one of our representatives.

## Equipment Rental

Visit [www.natick.armymwr.com](http://www.natick.armymwr.com) and click on the 'Equipment Checkout Center' banner.

### Items Available:

- Leaf Blowers
- Chainsaws
- Hydraulic Log Splitter
- Landscape Trailer
- Pop-Up Camper
- Snow blowers! \$200 for the entire season!
- Party and tailgate equipment!



## Hero WOD - January 2025

### The Seven

On Dec. 30, 2009, a suicide bomber killed seven CIA officers and one Jordanian officer in Afghanistan. Killed in the attack were CIA officers Jennifer Lynne Matthews, 45; Scott Michael Roberson, 39; Harold E. Brown Jr., 37; Darren LaBonte, 35; Elizabeth Hanson, 30; and security contractors Jeremy Jason Wise, 35, and Dane Clark Paresi, 46.

7 RFT  
7 handstand push-ups  
7 reps, 135-pound thrusters  
7 knees-to-elbows  
7 reps, 245-pound deadlifts  
7 burpees  
7 reps, 2-pood kettlebell swings  
7 pull-ups

*A Hero WOD, also known as a Hero Workout, is a challenging and intense CrossFit workout that is named after a fallen hero. These workouts are created to pay tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country or community.*



# Natick Army Community Service Program

## January 2024



### New Year, New ACS | 2025

Happy New Year! ACS has moved to Room A-121 in building 1 , and we're excited to kick off the year in our new office space. Stop by and check us out— we can't wait to welcome you!



### Financial Readiness' Classes | Wednesday, 8 January @ 1130—1230

Are you ready to take charge of your financial health? ACS is offering classes designed to help you assess your current financial situation, set goals, and create a roadmap for a more secure future. Use the QR code to register for the next class.



### ACS Community Needs Assessment, Coming Soon

ACS will soon launch a Community Needs Assessment, we're looking forward to your participation. Your input is vital in helping us gather data to shape the ACS program. Stay tuned for more details.



### Sip, Chat, and Connect | Wednesday, 13 February @ 1200-1300

Join us for an inviting and engaging morning of coffee, conversation, and community. Whether you're looking to make new connections, learn something new, or share experiences with fellow spouses, this gathering is you. Meet us in room A-121. (the new ACS office)



### 2025 AER Campaign | 1 March 2025

The AER Campaign kicks off on March 1, 2025! Stay tuned and get ready to make a difference. This is a great opportunity to provide financial support to our Soldiers and their Families. Let's come together to make an impact!



For more information contact: Natick Army Community Service

Phone: 508-206-4026

Email: [usarmy.natick.id-training.list.nati-accs@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.natick.id-training.list.nati-accs@army.mil)



# NSSC Holiday Recap





# Natick Soldier Systems Center - Holiday Season Kick-Off Events

*Story and Photos by Keith Jackson, Deputy to the Garrison Commander and  
Alfred Tripolone III, USAG-Natick Public Affairs*

The Natick Soldier Systems Center community gathered Dec. 4 to kick off the holiday season with its inaugural Christmas tree giveaway, followed by the Annual Holiday Tree Lighting.

The day began with Soldiers from the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, along with civilian employees and garrison volunteers, handing out free Christmas trees to military members, retirees, veterans, and their families.

At around 10 a.m., volunteers unloaded 75 trees donated by Operation Service, a local nonprofit dedicated to supporting service members past and present. Throughout the day, volunteers assisted families in selecting and trimming trees to ensure they were ready to take home.

This effort was part of the broader "Trees for Soldiers" program, now in its 14th year. The program, which runs from the day after Thanksgiving to Dec. 21, has grown steadily, distributing more than 1,200 trees this year across multiple events. Operation Service partnered with Cauley's Garden Center in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, to provide the trees at no cost to military families.

"Trees for Soldiers is an awesome event, and USAG Natick is honored to be a part of it," said Keith Jackson, Deputy to the Garrison Commander, U.S. Army Garrison Natick. "Operation Service is an outstanding organization doing great things for our local service members, retirees, and veterans. This event means a lot to the Natick military community and provides some much-needed holiday cheer."

For many families, having a live tree during the holidays is a cherished tradition. For those stationed far from loved ones, this simple gesture can lift spirits. Army Community Services Coordinator Yolanda Kennedy emphasized the impact, saying, "These events are always a great way for us to show support and bring joy to the families we serve here at NSSC. It's great to relieve even a little financial stress for our service members."

Later in the evening, the NSSC community came together for the Annual Holiday Tree Lighting. Guests enjoyed hot cocoa and lebkuchen (German spiced gingerbread cookies) in the Carney Hall foyer, courtesy of MWR, bringing a festive close to the day.

"Today was great. We had a lot of trees and were able to find homes for them all," said Antonio Paiva, a member of the U.S. Army Garrison Natick Department of Public Works. "It's not a bad day at work when you get to bring a little happiness to people at the start of the holiday season."





# NSSC Holiday Recap

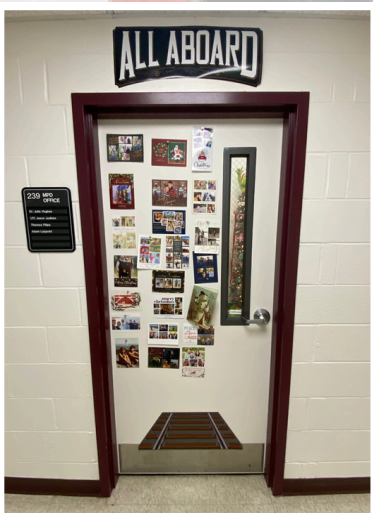




# Door Decorating Contest!

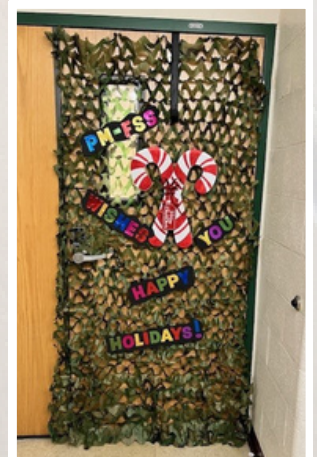


**1st Place:**  
**"Candy Land"**  
**Building 45 - G6**



**2nd Place:**  
**Building 42**  
**Room 239**

**3rd Place:**  
**Building 4**  
**Room 241**





# The Hygge Series: A Guide to Embracing Warmth, Comfort, and Connection This Winter

*Story by Vanessa L. Josey, USAG Natick Public Affairs Office*

As winter blankets the world with its chill and shorter days, it's easy to feel disconnected, both from others and from ourselves. For many, the season is marked by solitude and harshness. But there's a way to transform the cold months into something restorative and uplifting: hygge.

Hygge (pronounced hoo-gah) is a Danish concept that encompasses a sense of cozy contentment, well-being, and intentional joy. More than just an aesthetic, hygge is a way of life that focuses on finding beauty in simplicity and comfort, fostering a deeper sense of connection to the present moment. It's the warm glow of candlelight, the comfort of soft blankets, and the joy of sharing a meal with loved ones.

The Hygge Series is a thoughtful initiative designed to embrace these principles and help individuals find light and warmth during the darker winter months. Through a focus on creating intentional spaces, experiences, and rituals, the series encourages a return to mindfulness and togetherness.

## What to Expect from the Hygge Series

The *Hygge Series* provides inspiration and guidance for anyone seeking to navigate winter with joy and purpose. This series offers practical ideas and reflections on how to create cozy, meaningful moments that nurture both body and spirit.

### 1. Creating Cozy Spaces

Transform your home into a sanctuary. Small adjustments, like soft lighting, candles, warm textiles, and natural elements, can make any space feel peaceful and inviting. The series will share ideas on crafting environments that soothe the senses and invite relaxation, no matter the size of your home.

### 2. Prioritizing Connection

Hygge is about togetherness—whether through small gatherings, heartfelt conversations, or shared experiences. The series will highlight ways to bring people closer, from hosting intimate dinners with comfort foods to enjoying low-tech evenings playing board games or sharing stories by a fire.

### 3. Embracing Simple Pleasures

True joy often comes from life's simple moments. The Hygge Series will explore ways to reconnect with these pleasures, such as savoring a warm drink, curling up with a book, journaling, or taking mindful walks to appreciate winter's stillness and beauty.



# The Hygge Series - Cont.

## 4. Cultivating Rest and Self-Care

In a world that rarely slows down, winter is an opportunity to embrace rest and renewal. The series will encourage moments of self-care, whether that means taking time to reflect, enjoying nourishing foods, or creating calming routines that help ease stress and bring comfort.

## 5. Celebrating the Season

Winter often feels like something to endure, but the Hygge Series reframes it as a season to celebrate. The beauty of winter lies in its stillness, its capacity for quiet reflection, and its invitation to draw closer to what matters most.

## Why Hygge Matters

In Danish culture, where winters are long and dark, hygge is seen as a necessary antidote to isolation and stress. It's about turning inward, both physically and emotionally, to find warmth and gratitude in the present moment. It's a reminder that, even in life's most challenging seasons, we can find ways to nurture our well-being and deepen our connections.

The Hygge Series is more than an idea—it's a mindset shift. It's about making winter something we look forward to rather than endure. By embracing warmth, comfort, and community, we can transform the way we experience this season.

## An Invitation to Slow Down

This winter, the Hygge Series invites you to:

- Turn off the noise and embrace stillness.
- Light a candle, pour a warm drink, and savor the quiet moments.
- Connect with friends and family, even if only for a few shared hours.
- Find joy in the small, ordinary moments that bring comfort.

Hygge is a simple yet powerful practice that brings us back to what's important: being present, being connected, and being kind to ourselves. Through this series, we'll provide you with tools and inspiration to make this winter one of calm, connection, and intentional joy.

Let's embrace winter as a season of beauty, reflection, and rest. With the Hygge Series, we can find warmth and light together—even on the coldest days.



# NSSC Health and Wellness Committee

## Hygge Series



### Tea + Cocoa

January 29, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Carney Hall (Building 1) Café



### Yoga

February 5, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Carney Hall (Building 1) Hunter Auditorium



### Cooking Recipe Session

Details to Come



### Poetry Reading

March 5, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Carney Hall (Building 1) Hunter Auditorium

Questions?

Want to get involved in the committee?

Reach out to

Brian Balough | [brian.j.balough.civ@army.mil](mailto:brian.j.balough.civ@army.mil) | (508) 206-4017

Lynn Valcourt | [lynn.m.valcourt.civ@army.mil](mailto:lynn.m.valcourt.civ@army.mil) | (508) 206-4051



# NSSC Welcomes New Antiterrorism Officer

*Story and Photos by Alfred Tripolone III,  
USAG-Natick Public Affairs*

The U.S. Army Garrison Natick is proud to welcome Robert J. Burns as our new Antiterrorism Officer. With extensive experience in training, operations, and military service, Burns is committed to teamwork, trust, and mission accomplishment at the Natick Soldier Systems Center (NSSC).

Burns joins us after a successful Army Civilian career in Europe and 12 years of military service as an Airborne Infantryman. His background equips him with the skills and leadership needed to enhance NSSC's antiterrorism programs and ensure the safety of the installation.



Originally from New York, Burns and his family were drawn to Massachusetts for its vibrant communities and opportunities for outdoor activities. He notes that Natick feels like a homecoming, with its welcoming atmosphere and excellent environment for raising children.

Burns' work philosophy is centered on trust, a value he cultivated during his time as a paratrooper. "Trust in my training, team, and leadership was key to success," he says. He aims to foster a collaborative environment where challenges are met with innovative solutions.

"Hiring Mr. Burns is a huge win for not just the Garrison but also the installation. There is a lot of really important work that takes place at Natick, and the ATO plays a big role in helping to protect not only the work but also the people that do the work. We take that responsibility very seriously and are happy to have a high caliber teammate like Mr. Burns onboard," said Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Kelley, Garrison Command Sergeant Major, highlighting the significance of the ATO.

As Burns settles into his role, he is eager to become a dependable member of the Natick team and looks forward to learning more about his colleagues while making meaningful contributions to the mission.

"Hiring actions can be challenging and frustrating, but sometimes you get lucky and find some great people who join the team and bring the right attitude and work ethic. I would just challenge Mr. Burns to maintain that and continue to make things better every day," Kelley also noted.

Please join us in welcoming Mr. Burns to the NSSC family. We are excited to have him on board and look forward to the expertise and dedication he will bring to our team.



# NSSC Introduces New Victim Advocate in SHARP Office

*Story and Photos by Alfred Tripolone III,  
USAG-Natick Public Affairs*



The U.S. Army Garrison Natick Soldier Systems Center (NSSC) recently welcomed Tanina Klitgaard as the new Victim Advocate in its Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) office. With nearly eight years of experience in both military and corporate advocacy, Klitgaard brings a wealth of knowledge to the SHARP team.

Klitgaard's transition to NSSC follows a restructuring of the SHARP program, which realigned her from the Devens Reserve Forces Training Area, where she served as a Victim Advocate for the past year. Tanina has extensive experience working with non-profits, assisting survivors, and collaborating with law enforcement, demonstrating her dedication to advocacy and empowerment.

"I emphasize the empowerment model in my work," Klitgaard said. "If a client seeks my support, I will always be transparent about their options... My role is to help them regain what they feel has been taken from them and to ensure they know they have a voice."

Elaine Andrew, NSSC's Installation Sexual Assault Response Coordinator expressed enthusiasm about the fresh perspectives Klitgaard brings to the SHARP office. "New people bring new vision," Andrew said. "She has experience in civilian victim advocacy, which will enrich our program. Being a native of Massachusetts is also an asset, as she is familiar with state and local civilian processes."

Klitgaard's Massachusetts roots and her recent decision to settle in the area with her husband reflect her strong ties to the community. She embraces the uniqueness of New England life, particularly the vibrant fall season, which she cites as a personal favorite.

Her commitment to fostering a safe and supportive environment aligns with the SHARP office's mission. Andrew emphasized the importance of accessibility and approachability within the program: "It is crucial for people to know where their SHARP office is located because they need a safe space to speak about sexual harassment or assault. They should be aware of their options within DoD guidance. We also need to be approachable, transparent, honest, and receptive to everyone."



# NSSC Introduces New Victim Advocate in SHARP Office - Cont.

As she transitions into her role at NSSC, Klitgaard looks forward to focusing on prevention efforts and enhancing collaboration. "Prevention is a significant component of the SHARP program. I am eager to plan future awareness events and partner with other programs here, as well as local agencies," she said.

Klitgaard is enthusiastic about engaging with the community through creative initiatives. "I know it might be challenging to coordinate at times, but I am ready for it and will actively brainstorm fun ideas to bring everyone together," she added.

Please help us welcome, Tanina Klitgaard, to the U.S. Army Garrison Natick Soldier Systems Center. With her expertise, fresh perspective, and passion for advocacy, Klitgaard is poised to make a lasting impact on the SHARP office and the NSSC community.



**NATICK SHARP 24/7 Hotline: ☎ (508)395-9141**  
**DOD SAFE HELPLINE: 877-995-5247**  
**[www.safehelpline.org](http://www.safehelpline.org)**





# Local History: The Fire of 1874

*Story and Photos Courtesy of the  
Natick Historical Society*

Terrible Visitation!

The heart of our town in  
ashes.

Clark's new block, the pride  
of Natick, in ruins.

Natick will rise again.



*In this view looking south, much of the town center  
burned to the ground.*

In mid-January 1874, The Natick Bulletin's headlines shouted the dreadful story. A fast-moving fire had destroyed 37 buildings and much of the town center. Losses were estimated at over \$650,000. On January 14, The Boston Globe said the previous day's conflagration was "One of seething flame, the light of which illuminated the sky for a distance of twenty miles around!" Newspaper editors and writers didn't hold anything back in the late 19th century. The stories were hyped with sensational details, and they openly embraced a community spirit that reflected the alarming impact of the fire.

The January 13 early morning blaze leveled most of five business blocks and 18 structures in the center of town, made almost 25 people homeless, burned the First Congregational Church, and melted its bell. Nearly every building was destroyed in the blocks bounded by Central, Main, and Washington streets and the railroad.

For a small town like Natick—the population was about 7,500 in 1874—the loss was comparatively worse than the destruction in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. As in most towns, the wooden structures made fire a constant danger. The horrible inferno on that cold January night all too vividly brought to mind the destructive blaze that leveled seven buildings in the center of South Natick less than two years earlier. That fire, on March 2, 1872, was a calamity on a smaller scale, but it sometimes gets a footnote in town histories. The South Natick fire burned the Natick Historical Society's first collection of stuffed animals and artifacts (see story below).

The downtown fire started about 3 a.m. at the southwest corner of Summer and Main streets, close to the fire department's Eagle Engine House—which burned down. The blaze spread south to engulf most of "Clark's elegant block" facing Central Street and also moved north across Summer to consume the Wolcott Shoe Factory and much of that block. Capricious winds arched the flames eastward across Main Street. They ignited a couple dozen businesses and dwellings, consuming the First Congregational Church, the fire



# Local History: The Fire of 1874 - Cont.

department's hook-and-ladder house, banks, shoe factories, dry goods stores, town offices, and two "coffin warerooms." Within four hours, the terrible destruction was complete. The losses amounted to about 20 percent of all taxable property in the town.

The firefighters worked valiantly to control the fire but they were ill-equipped to do so. The town's steam-powered pump was cranky; getting the boiler started was trouble, and old canvas hoses burst when they were pressurized. It took 20 minutes to start the water flowing. There was an inadequate system of "reservoirs" (scattered ditches, 20-30 feet deep) that served as the emergency water supply. South Natick, Ashland, Framingham, and Newton sent men and equipment to help—like the "hand engine from Saxonville...[that] rendered most efficient and valuable aid"—and Boston firemen brought a steam pump by special train. The horse-drawn apparatus mainly arrived too late to do much good, and the insufficient water supply limited the work. Natick and many neighboring towns upgraded their firefighting capabilities significantly after the fire. Within a year, Natick installed 78 new fire hydrants.

In profoundly sad language, The Natick Bulletin wrote the lead of its first story about the fire: "The business portion of our beautiful town lies in ashes. The fire demon has laid his withering hand upon the home of nearly our mercantile, religious, and professional interests, and it has vanished from sight. It is almost too terrible to realize."

The Bulletin's fire coverage devoted a mournful paragraph to the loss of the Congregational Church: "The burning of the spire of the Congregational church was a most magnificent spectacle, though a sad one. The body of the edifice had been consumed and had fallen in, leaving the spire standing like a flame-sheeted spectre. As the covering became burned, it left the frame exposed to view, presenting a complete network of glowing fire...Just before the bell fell from its position, it gave three mournful strokes, as if in solemn farewell."

Expressing the expansive communal optimism of that era, the Bulletin declared: "The burnt district will be rebuilt with the coming of Spring, and in place of the wooden structures which lately stood will rise brick and stone buildings." Within a week, the rebuilding had begun.

Natick selectmen got the ball rolling by approving funds for a new firehouse, and a year later, the new Central Fire Station (now converted for use by The Center for Arts in Natick, TCAN) opened on Summer Street. It had four large bays for horse-drawn firefighting equipment, with suspended leather harnesses lowered onto the eager horses when a fire alarm sounded.



# Local History: Boston's Great Molasses Flood

*Story Courtesy of the  
Boston Public Library*

Who Said Molasses Moves Slowly in January?

Shortly after noon, on January 15th, 1919, a storage tank containing over 2.3 million gallons of molasses collapsed in the city's North End. A wave of molasses, estimated by some to be as high as 15 feet, and moving at a speed of approximately 35 miles per hour, swept through the area.



*Panorama of the Molasses Disaster site.  
Photograph: Globe Newspaper Co. (creator).*

The flood was over in less than five minutes and rescuers, including over a hundred sailors from the USS Nantucket, quickly arrived on the scene. The next day, an article in the Boston Post provided a graphic account of the sight that met the first responders:

“Molasses, waist deep, covered the street and swirled and bubbled about the wreckage. Here and there struggled a form — whether it was animal or human being was impossible to tell. Only an upheaval, a thrashing about in the sticky mass, showed where any life was. Horses died like so many flies on sticky fly paper. The more they struggled, the deeper in the mess they were ensnared. Human beings — men and women — suffered likewise.”

The flood killed 21 people, injured about 150 more, and caused extensive damage to property. Cleanup took weeks. Crews washed away the molasses with salt water, and used sand to absorb it. But what had caused the disaster? Why had the molasses holding tank ruptured?

The holding tank belonged to The United States Industrial Alcohol Co. (USIA). The company used the tank to store the molasses it needed to make rum and industrial alcohol for munitions. In the aftermath of the tragedy, many lawsuits were filed against USIA. The company tried to explain away the disaster by blaming bomb-planting anarchists. The court-appointed auditor's report found, however, that the tank collapsed because of structural weakness. USIA was held liable and ordered to pay damages.

Two modern studies have revisited the collapse and its causes. One Harvard University Study looked at the impact low winter temperatures had on the disaster. A 2015 study by a team of structural engineers analyzed how the construction of the tank, and the type of steel used, contributed to the collapse.

The tragedy led to stricter construction codes in Massachusetts, and other states across the country.





# NSSC Online

*Follow us on the web*



## **U.S. Army Garrison Natick:**

Webpage: <https://home.army.mil/natick/>

News: <https://www.army.mil/natick>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NatickSSC/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/u-s-army-garrison-natick/>

X: <https://www.x.com/NatickSSC>

## **DEVCOM Soldier Center Online:**

Webpage: <https://sc.devcom.army.mil>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/devcom.SoldierCenter>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/us-army-ccdc-soldier-center/>

X: [https://x.com/DEVCOM\\_SC](https://x.com/DEVCOM_SC)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@USArmyCCDCSoldierCenter>

## **U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine:**

Webpage: <https://usariem.health.mil/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/USARIEM>

X: <https://www.x.com/TeamUSARIEM>

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## **Content Submission**

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- **Review Process:** Once submitted, you'll be notified that your content is under review.
- **Approval Notification:** When content is approved, you'll receive an automatic email confirmation.
- **Newsletter Inclusion:** Approved content received by the 4th Monday of the month, will be included in the next issue of the newsletter.
- **Final Edits:** The newsletter is edited for AP style.
- **Newsletter Publication:** The newsletter will be released on the first Monday of the new month.