ANNAPOLIS, Md. – Governor Larry Hogan has authorized deployment of the Maryland Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team (MD-HART) to North Carolina as a measure to assist in rescue efforts from flooding due to Hurricane Florence. Additionally, the governor announced that Maryland will open two shelters for those seeking a safe place to wait out the storm, including potential evacuees coming from states further south.

The MD-HART team consists of two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters with eight crew members and three maintainers from the Maryland Army National Guard, and helicopter search and rescue technicians from Baltimore, Harford, Howard, and Montgomery Counties. The team will depart on Sunday to assist with the recovery effort. The Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) continues to coordinate Maryland’s response and support to affected states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

“As coastal states feel the impact of Hurricane Florence, we are working to ensure that any travelers, evacuees, or Maryland residents seeking shelter have a safe place to stay during the storm, and we also stand ready to assist other states,” said Governor Hogan. “This elite team is an excellent example of our state and counties working together to provide support to those in need, and we are proud to have the capability to send the MD-HART to North Carolina.”

The MD-HART is able to support multiple missions including vehicle rescues in swift water flood zones, structure rescue through window/door/balcony insertion, and structure rescue form rooftops and confined areas in flood zones, mountain wilderness extrications, tree rescue/extrication, open/inland/swift water rescue, and mass rescue capability. This support is delivered through hoist and short-haul capable helicopters. The team is also trained in disaster assessment.

Yesterday, the governor toured the Maryland National Guard Brigadier General William Smallwood Readiness Center in La Plata, Md. In response to Hurricane Florence, Maryland is opening two pet-friendly shelters to support those who may need a safe place to stay during this storm. The locations are as follows:

University of Maryland College Park (Ritchie Coliseum)
7950 Baltimore Avenue
College Park, MD 20740

Chesapeake College
Health Professions and Athletics Center
1000 College Circle
Wye Mills, MD 21679

People seeking shelter who have specific questions about shelters in Maryland, or need disaster reunification assistance, should please call 1-888-756-7836.

In October 2016, Governor Hogan authorized the deployment of the MD-HART team to Columbia, South Carolina in response to the flooding from Hurricane Matthew. The team flew more than 19 hours conducting search and rescue and reconnaissance missions.

In addition to the HART team, MEMA is sending a Damage Assessment Team Leader to assist South Carolina.