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Engineers proudly repair Campbell roads, culverts

by Leejay Lockhart, Courier staff Aug 4, 2016



Photo by Leejay Lockhart | Courier

Sergeant Chris Barbero, a squad leader for Company B, 39th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, uses a type three roller to compact the road surface during road repairs Tuesday. Barbero is part of a group of Soldiers assisting in repairing roads in Fort Campbell's training area damaged by storms last month.

A series of severe summer storms damaged roads and culverts throughout Fort Campbell's training area. While the Directorate of Public Works roads and grounds crews normally maintain and repair all of Fort Campbell's roads, they are receiving assistance from military engineer assets to aid in storm recovery.

The partnership has Soldiers from 2nd Platoon, B Company, 39th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, deep in Fort Campbell's training area doing road repair. They still start off the day with physical training until 8 a.m. and then they meet in their motorpool and drive more than 20 miles to reach the road they are repairing.

Sergeant Wayne Albury, a platoon sergeant with the unit ensures the Soldiers are proceeding according to plan with the road construction. For the Soldiers this monthlong assignment repairing washed out roads is a great opportunity to train on tasks they may have to perform while deployed and increase their readiness.

"This is one of our METL tasks – mission essential task list – improving combat roads and trails," Albury said. "So they are actually completing one of our taskings and at the same time they are getting a lot of training."

Sergeant Chris Barbero, a squad leader and noncommissioned officer in charge of the work detail, agreed with Albury that the assignment allows Soldiers to enhance their skills while assisting the post. "[The Soldiers] actually get to do something most of them haven't done outside of training," Barbero said. "Normally we're doing fighting positions ... so doing a bigger scale project like this allows them to practice something they learned in AIT. It refreshes their skills on some of the equipment they haven't got to work with too much lately and they get to see an end product that will last. We don't just cover it up."

The engineers' primary piece of equipment for the project is the 120M Grader. Its blade cuts out the ruts and churns the road materials. After cutting and churning they use a type three vibratory roller to tamp down the loose soil into a compacted road surface. The road will have a slight angle, usual going from the center of the road to facilitate water drainage. Finally, the Soldiers use a M1157A1 10-ton dump truck to transport gravel. After the dump truck spreads the gravel the grader will smooth it out over the road's surface said Albury.

Barbero voiced his excitement to be part of the team repairing the roads.

“It’s great,” Barbero said. “It’s nice to actively work on our job, not just working for our company, working for brigade, but doing something everybody on post will get to experience. A lot of people will drive on it in the near future and long term. So it will be nice to make our mark.”

Some of the ruts in the roads the engineers are repairing are deep enough to present a hazard for the vehicles that often travel through the training area. It takes multiple passes with the grader to create a smooth surface free of ruts, in several places.

Repairing these ruts not only make the convoy routes safer, but reduces travel time as well when the roads are in good shape, Albury said.

As it is cutting and smoothing the road surface the grader moves anywhere from 3 mph on rough spots up to 6 mph on smoother patches of road. The roller moves even slower, as it compacts the road surface.

The NCOs had to complete a thorough composite risk management analysis before work started as part of the larger repair operation. Ensuring the safety of their Soldiers is one of the top priorities. So in addition to making sure Soldiers stay hydrated during the hot summer days, avoiding wildlife and wearing personal protective equipment, Barbero also takes other measures to ensure safety.

“It’s an open road,” Barbero said “It’s not closed off just for us, as long as they’re aware or somebody on the ground working with them is aware we can be ready for traffic and stop what we’re doing and allow them to pass. We also have somebody on the ground at all times to help maintain that situational awareness.”

While the unit conducts several training missions throughout the year, this operation allows the Soldiers to augment their training with real world skills.

“Minus hostile actions it’s pretty similar [to deployed operations]” Albury said. “The only difference is a lot of time you’re not going to get this rock to put back down. Usually it’s just pretty much clay roads and the soil. Like with any road it needs to be flat and free of pot holes so you can get to where you’re going quick and safely.”