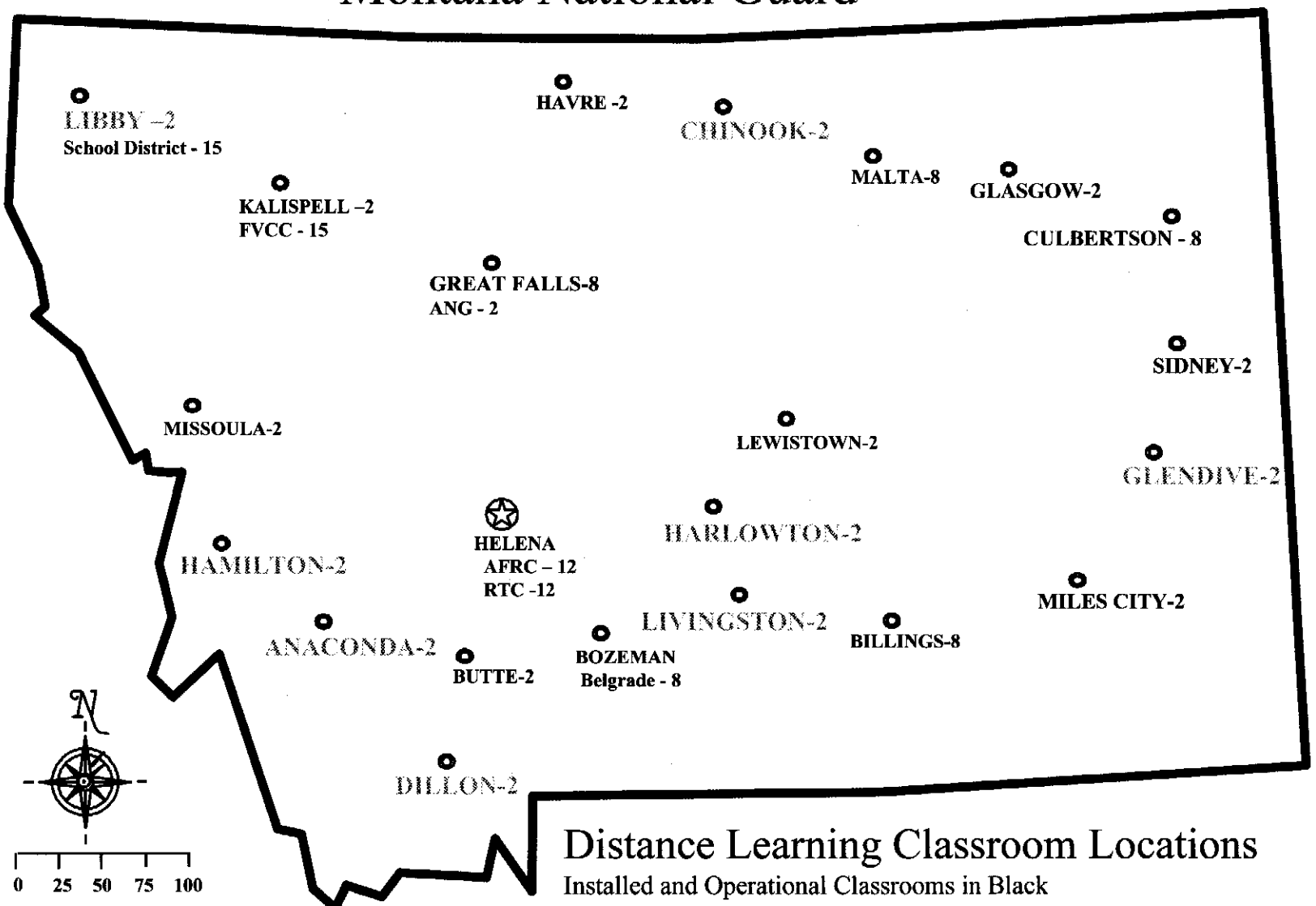
Montana National Guard



Distance Learning Classroom Locations

Installed and Operational Classrooms in Black

Scheduled for FY 05 in Red

DATE: 20 March 1996

EXHIBIT 1
DATE Feb. 8, 2005
HB 2; Dept. of Military Affairs

Montana National Guard
Distance Learning Project

Summary: To provide affordable access to quality education and training for the soldiers and citizens of Montana by utilizing state of the art information technology, the Montana National Guard initiated a Distance Learning Project in 1997. In October 1999, the National Guard received $4.6 million dollars in Federal funding to implement the project. The end state for the project currently includes a total of 26 classrooms in all Montana communities with National Guard presence. One key provision with the Federal funding directed that the distance learning facilities be made available to state and local government, educational institutions and private citizens and companies on a reimbursable basis. This provision was labeled "shared use."

Project Status:

1. Budget issues and contractual issues at the national level have slowed the progress of classroom installation. The original plan was to have all classrooms installed and operational in Federal Fiscal Year 2003. The current status: 18 classrooms are installed and operational with a video bridge capable of connecting all 26 classrooms as they come on-line; 8 classrooms are scheduled for installation late in Federal Fiscal Year 2005.

2. The rate structure for shared use customers of the system has been pending the completion of a sufficient number of classrooms and the video bridge to make shared use viable. Share use fees collected would utilize the State Special Spending Authority to hold the funds, reimburse the Federal costs and pay operational costs for the system. The National Guard has the following draft rate plan in final preparation stages to be submitted for approval by the United States Property and Fiscal Officer:

   A. Federal Non-Military Shared Use: $ 8.00 per hour (See Note)
   B. State and Local Government Shared Use: $ 25.00 per hour
   C. Educational Institutions Shared Use: $ 25.00 per hour
   D. Private Citizen/Company Shared Use: $100.00 per hour (See Note)

   Note: Shared use for private citizens and companies must not compete with private industry. Rates must not under cut the lowest private company rate available in the Montana market. Federal non-military rates cannot include reimbursement for Federal labor costs.

3. Potential shared use by state entities is limited only by availability of funding to pay the shared use fee and available time on the system. The Montana National Guard Distance Learning Network will not compete or replace the State of Montana METNET system. The National Guard system will supplement METNET by providing sites in additional communities and additional capacity in larger communities with higher demand. Shared use has already started on the system:

   A. Libby School District has participated in several OPI video teleconferencing events, connecting from the National Guard network to the METNET bridge.
   B. The American Legion has approached the National Guard on using the system for training courses.
   C. Valley County has approached the National Guard on using the system for first responder training.

4. The Montana National Guard Distance Learning Network is also available for use in emergency situations, to provide better command, control and communication capabilities to the incident commander if they are located close enough to a classroom site.