

5/7/20 Municipal & First Responder Call Notes

I. **Welcome and Introduction:** Director Erica Bornemann

- This is the weekly call for first responders, EMDs, RPCs, and municipal officials.
 - The meeting invitations include a link to a survey we use to guide our talking points. The survey will only capture one question per response. To ask multiple questions, fill out the survey multiple times. The survey link will not change week to week.
 - FAQs will be updated as needed and can be found at: <https://vem.vermont.gov/coronavirus>
 - From this site you can also click on the [“Call Notes” section](#) on the left-hand side where we will post notes from this call. It will be added to the list of First Responder Notes.
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II. **COVID-19 Overview/VDH Comments:** Deputy Commissioner Tracy Dolan

- The state’s push for more aggressive testing began, including increased testing of Department of Corrections staff and long-term care facility staff and residents.
 - We may see an increase in cases with this more aggressive testing strategy. This is expected.
 - While the curve is flattening in Vermont, there are still lots of challenges in neighboring states.
 - Re-opening too fast might draw a lot of out-of-state residents, as happened in Georgia.
 - There will be a pop-up testing site at the VDH Lab in Colchester this Saturday, specifically for first responders and some healthcare workers. Up to 384 people can be tested, by appointment only. The phone number to register can be found in emails sent out yesterday.
 - There will be additional testing sites at White River Junction, Bennington, and Brattleboro, aimed at a wider demographic than just first responders and healthcare workers. More information on these sites is forthcoming.
- Addendum 13 of the executive order, released Wednesday, included the following face-covering guidance: All Vermonters are encouraged to wear face coverings over their nose and mouth any time they are interacting with others from outside their households, including in congregate outdoor settings. Masks are not recommended for strenuous outdoor activity. Businesses and non-profit and government entities may require customers or clients to wear masks.
- The recommended period of self-isolation following exposure may be going from 14 days to 12 days.

Office of EMS Updates – EMS Chief Dan Batsie

- First responders should wear cloth face coverings in stations, if there is more than one person present. Please continue to be rigorous in taking the needed precautions.
- The Office of EMS continues to monitor absenteeism. There were only 5 reported absences in Vermont EMS agencies over the last week.
- The state is pushing forward with the 2020 EMS protocol update. The update should be posted by the end of week and will be live by May 15th.
- Nine (9) EMS agencies are participating in a pilot program of specimen collection for COVID-19 testing. This program is designed to enhance capability, especially sudden needs for tests (e.g., following an outbreak at a long-term care facility). EMS will play an important role in aggressive testing, such as allowing for more mobile testing. There is plenty of room to grow this program, such as including more agencies.
- The Office of EMS is working on an EMS strike team – i.e., a list of agencies available to send a staffed ambulance to an area in crisis. Participation in the team is voluntary. If deployed, the state would compensate the agency. The idea was brought to the EMS advisory committee, and the Office of EMS is trying to work out

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the mechanism for payment. The strike team model could be used both in response to COVID-19 and in other scenarios that limit EMS availability. Hopefully there will be more information by next week.

- In consultation with the state epidemiologist, and in the spirit of the new executive order addendum, the state is opening up some psycho-motor training. The Office of EMS is still working on appropriate restrictions, and will have an announcement, likely tomorrow, about students completing ongoing EMS classes. The restrictions will likely consist of health screening, wearing PPE, cleaning training materials, and training in small groups. The goal is for current classes to conclude and new classes to begin. The update should also allow for psycho-motor testing.
 - Volunteer EMS and fire departments do have to complete the VOSHA training prior to resuming in-person trainings and meetings, if the members of the department are classified as employees (usually operationally defined as receiving any pay or stipend of any kind). However, do not be intimidated by the VOSHA training – it is brief and easy to complete.
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III. SEOC Overview/ VEM Comments: Director Erica Bornemann

- **SEOC status**
 - The SEOC is fully activated every day from 0800 until 1600. The SEOC is now fully virtual.
- There have been three updates to the Governor's executive order since our last call.
- Starting with the most recent update, on Wednesday Governor Scott issued Addendum 13 of his executive order, which amended Addendum 6 to make clear that Vermonters may leave home to get fresh air and exercise and resume limited social interactions and gatherings of 10 or fewer people, preferably in outdoor settings, provided that distancing and protocols for hygiene consistent with guidance from VDH and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), are observed. Addendum 13 outlined that:
 - Vermonters may leave home to participate in outdoor recreation and outdoor fitness activities that require low or no direct physical contact.
 - Vermonters should continue to limit non-essential travel. Anyone who leaves Vermont for more than one day for non-essential travel is still required to quarantine at home for 14 days upon their return.
 - Older adults (age 65 and over) and people with underlying medical conditions should continue to self-isolate, and family and friends should do everything they can to help keep them safe.
 - Members of one household may choose to socialize – and allow children to play – with members of another household, such as family, neighbors, or friends known to be following VDH/CDC health and safety precautions.
 - Effective 5/7, all businesses and non-profits and government entities which support or offer outdoor recreation and outdoor fitness activities that require low or no direct physical contact may begin operations, subject to health and safety guidelines and training requirements.
 - Those allowed to being operations include, but are not limited to state and municipal parks, recreation associations, trail networks, golf courses, big game check stations and guided expeditions. Campgrounds, marinas, and beaches shall not be opened at this time.
 - Please refer to the [text of the addendum](#) itself for specifics.
- We've received a question about what towns without police departments can do to enforce the executive order and disperse large crowds.
 - It is important to maintain an educational posture. It is usually not advisable to try to disperse crowds on the basis of the executive order alone.

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- Consider distributing [this guidance](#) from the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation.
- The Vermont State Police and the Agency of Natural Resources are working on further messaging about summer crowds.
- The second executive order update was on Monday, when Governor Scott [amended Addendum 3](#), allowing healthcare providers to begin non-essential outpatient clinic visits, diagnostic imaging, and outpatient surgeries and procedures.
 - As a prerequisite for this expansion of services, providers must demonstrate that they are adhering to physical distancing and relevant CDC guidelines regarding infection control and prevention to maintain a safe environment for patients and staff. The amendment details the specific measures that are required.
- The third and final executive order update was on Friday, when Governor Scott announced [Addendum 12](#), furthering the phased reopening of businesses in Vermont. If able to comply with appropriate safety measures, the following operations are allowed to operate:
 - Crews of 10 or fewer employees per location/job to perform outdoor work and construction work in unoccupied job sites. (Effective May 4)
 - Manufacturing and distribution operations may resume with a maximum of 10 employees in any location if they are low-density and ensure employees are always six feet apart. (Effective May 4)
 - Manufacturing, construction and distribution operations may restart with as few employees as necessary to permit full operations if they can meet all health and safety requirements, comply with ACCD guidance and develop enhanced training programs that expand on the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Agency (VOSHA) training. (Effective May 11)
- ACCD is providing updated sector-specific guidance located on the ACCD website under [Resources for Businesses](#). For further questions, use the "[request additional guidance](#)" web inquiry form on the ACCD website.
- We strongly recommend that all of you read the recent executive order updates for specifics. The updates are available on the governor's office website under "Executive Orders."
- **SEOC active missions that have been progressing this week:**
 - The Vermont Foodbank and Vermont National Guard is distributing food to those in need at distribution points to ease demand on food shelves around that state.
 - The National Guard set up and operated these Commodity Points of Distribution (CPODs) in Swanton, North Clarendon, Newport, Bennington, South Hero, North Springfield, and Williston over the past two weeks.
 - The locations were determined by the Foodbank, based on the level of need.
 - Planning is underway for Box Meal Distribution sites to be established across the state in the coming 1-2 weeks. Specific dates will be determined confirmed when food supplies are secured.

Day	Town	County	Location
Day 1	Barre, VT	Washington	Edward F Knapp State Airport
Day 2	Peru, VT	Bennington	Bromley Mountain
Day 3	Middlebury, VT	Addison	Middlebury State Airport
Day 4	Thetford, VT	Orange	Thetford Academy
Day 5	Morristown, VT	Lamoille	Morrisville-Stowe State Airport
Day 6	Dummerston, VT	Windham	Dummerston AOT Facility
Day 7	Lyndonville, VT	Caledonia	Caledonia County State Airport

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Day 8	Swanton, VT	Franklin	Franklin County State Airport
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- Further information, including a complete listing of dates and times, will be updated on VEM's website: <https://vem.vermont.gov/pods>
- 1,000 more cases of Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MREs) are available upon request to local Emergency Management Directors with an identified need in their town over the next 30 days. These are for emergency needs, not a just-in-case stockpile. There is a limit of 20 cases per town. The locality will likely be responsible for transporting the MREs. The state won't be able to take them back. To request these cases of MREs, call the SEOC.
- The SEOC Human Services branch is working with the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living and Ben and Jerry's to distribute ice cream to nursing homes across the state for Mother's Day.
- The SEOC Joint Information Center developed a page on the VEM website for cloth face coverings that contains information on face covering guidance from the Health Department, and where to purchase cloth face coverings locally in Vermont. This information can be found at: <https://vem.vermont.gov/covid19/facecovering>
 - The state is working to stock cloth face coverings and cleaning supplies, but are prioritizing high-priority destinations. We endeavor to be able to expand the availability of these supplies as a back up sources for towns, but we currently do not have the resources to do so. We have to ensure we have enough stock to cover prioritized sites and ensure the safety of folks who work there.
 - Use the list of vendors in the link above as a starting point to source cloth face coverings.
- **Disaster Declaration - DR 4532**
 - PPE is a reimbursable cost under the state's disaster declaration.
 - More information on how to apply and eligible costs can be found on the [VEM website](#).
- We got a question about whether employers can legally prevent an employee with COVID-19 risk factors (such as a preexisting respiratory condition) from returning to work.
 - Touch base with Attorney General's office directly. The SEOC can't comment on whether an employee should seek legal counsel.
- We received a question about if cemeteries can be open for funeral services and burials?
 - Yes, as long as gatherings are limited to fewer than 10 people and other CDC/VDH guidelines are followed. There is sector-specific guidance for Funeral and Mortuary Services on the [ACCD website](#).
- We have received a number of questions about whether towns should cancel summer camps.
 - Summer camp guidance will be available very soon.

IV. Division of Fire Safety – Fire Academy Chief Peter Lynch

- According to DFS's biweekly survey, Vermont fire departments are handling emergencies well and have sufficient PPE. However, there are concerns that PPE will become less available as the pandemic continues.
- The next survey will go out on Friday, May 15th.
- DFS is getting a lot of questions from fire departments about when and how to transition back to in-person trainings, meetings, work details, etc. DFS is working with the SEOC to develop guidance on this topic as soon as possible.

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- DFS is awaiting official guidance on whether volunteer fire departments should screen their members for fever prior to responding to emergencies.
 - The Fire Academy distributed information about the AFG COVID-19 Supplemental Grant program. Applications can be submitted online and are due to FEMA by May 15th.
 - The grant can be used for purchases up to 12 months following the award date, as well as retroactively for previous purchases.
 - There are two reasons why small communities should consider this potential funding source: 1) the federal share for these competitive grants is 95%, higher than the 75% for FEMA Public Assistance (PA) Emergency Protective Measures. 2) There are mini-grants available for up to \$3,000, and those could be good for communities that had PPE expenses below the \$3,300 threshold for Public Assistance eligibility. The mini-grants require less paperwork.
 - The Fire Academy hopes to resume in-person classes soon. More information is forthcoming.
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V. QUESTIONS FROM CALL PARTICIPANTS

- Municipalities can satisfy the addendum 13 requirement for a [health and safety training program](#) with a single program for the entire town, as long as the plan covers each specific department and facility within the town.
- The Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS) has contracts for PPE and cleaning supplies that municipalities can use. However, supply is limited. A list of BGS contracts can be found on its [website](#).
- Per addendum 13, access to facilities for high-contact sports, such as basketball courts, should be restricted. There are many ways to remind residents of these restrictions, such as signage and social media posts. We understand that it is hard to enforce these measures, so the emphasis should be on spreading the message.
- Addendum 13 addresses public restrooms: "Restroom facilities may only be opened if they can be regularly cleaned and disinfected in accordance with VDH/CDC guidelines."