

# 1/14/21 Municipal & First Responder Call Outline and Talking Points

## I. **Welcome and Introduction:** DPS Deputy Commissioner Chris Herrick

- Welcome participants on the call.
- This is the weekly call for first responders, EMDs, RPCs, and municipal officials.
- The next call will be on Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 2pm. The invitation will go out on Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup>.
- 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.
- On today's call we will hear from DEPRIP Director Dan Batsie and Vermont League of Cities and Towns Public Policy and Advocacy Director Karen Horn. In addition, we have Vermont State Police Lieutenant Matthew Amadon and Fire Academy Chief Pete Lynch available to answer questions. We will be providing you all an overview of the State's response to COVID-19 and we will have time for additional questions at the end of the call.
- 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.

### **AGENDA:**

- I. Intro/call format**
- II. COVID-19/VDH overview**
- III. SEOC overview/VEM comments**
- IV. VLCT comments**
- V. Q&A with participants**

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## II. **COVID-19 Overview/VDH Comments:** HOC Incident Commander and DEPRIP Director Dan Batsie

- Overall update on COVID-19 in Vermont
  - Vermont recorded 197 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday, one of the highest single-day jumps the state has seen.
  - The 7-day test positivity rate is 2.9%, up a bit from 2.7% a week ago.
  - 4 deaths were reported for yesterday, and 7 deaths were reported for the last week, which is down from last week. This statistic leveling off reflects how COVID-19 outbreaks at long-term care facilities are being brought under control.
  - 48 Vermonters are currently hospitalized with COVID-19, 8 of whom are in intensive care and 1 of whom is on a ventilator. It's concerning that hospitalizations are growing at smaller hospitals, because it's easier for those facilities to reach capacity.
  - The Department of Health's Epidemiological Branch is tracking 42 outbreaks and 387 situations, including 54 new situations uncovered yesterday.
- First responder testing:
  - Daily testing is available throughout the state, and first responders are encouraged to sign up for testing anytime scheduling allows via the [Department of Health website](#).
  - The Office of EMS and the Department of Public Safety recognize the importance of testing in the first response community, so a weekly priority testing window will be offered statewide at local testing sites. First Responders have special walk-in slots held for them at the following locations and times:
    - Berlin (3336 Airport Rd., in rear of credit union building): Wednesdays, 6:30pm-7:00pm, starting 1/13/21
    - St. Johnsbury (161 Sherman Dr., parking lot tent): Thursdays, 9:00am-9:30am, starting 1/14/21
    - Morrisville (Northgate Plaza, between nail salon and laundromat): Mondays from 5-5:30pm starting 1/18

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- Bennington (120 McKinley St.): Tuesdays, 9:00am-9:30am, starting 1/19/21
- Fairlee (5445 Lake Morey Rd. E): Wednesdays, 9:00-9:30am, starting 1/27/21
- Middlebury (154 Creek Rd.): Wednesdays from 12-12:30pm starting on 1/27/21
- Newport (189 Prouty Dr.): this clinic has walk-in availability for First Responders all day, every day.
- Springfield (51 Pearl St, Level 1): Thursdays, 8:00-8:30am
- Due to high demand in Chittenden County, a first responder-only day has been scheduled for January 20<sup>th</sup> at the Williston Armory from 9am-3pm. While this event is open to all first responders, it is intended to meet the needs of those who routinely respond in Chittenden County. Responders outside Chittenden County should access testing at their local test sites. Sign up is required for the Williston site and links to sign up were shared in the email announcing the first responder testing prioritization program.
- The Health Operations Center is maintaining its rapid response capability for departments impacted by COVID-19 exposures. To access this resource, call the state Watch Officer 24/7.
- We've received a question about how long municipalities need to keep records of visitors, shift rosters, etc. for contact tracing.
  - Guidance from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development states that all businesses and organizations that serve the public and host non-essential activities shall maintain an easily accessible, legible log of all employees, customers, members, and guests and their contact information, including name, address, phone number and email address for 30 days in the event contact tracing is required by the Department of Health.
- Vaccination updates
  - Phase 1a priority vaccinations are ongoing, and this is the phase first responders are a part of. Some 28,267 Vermonters have been vaccinated so far, or 4.7% of the state's 16-years-old and over population. 4,092 Vermonters received their second dose already.
  - The State sent the rosters collected from first response agencies to Vermont's hospitals. First response agencies should be hearing from hospitals on when they can get vaccinated. If your agency doesn't hear back by the end of this week, let Dan Batsie or the SEOC know. The exact vaccination timeline will vary by hospital.
  - With most hospitals nearly finished administering priority vaccinations, the next vaccination phase will start very soon. This next phase will start with Vermonters 75 years old and older, then open up to progressively younger age cohorts. There are roughly 50,000 Vermonters who are 75 years old or older, so this is a huge lift.
  - The Vermont Office of EMS met yesterday with EMS Chiefs to discuss how Vermont's EMS agencies can assist in mass vaccinations.
    - The Department of Health will contract with EMS agencies to provide staffing at high-throughput points of distribution, paying for agency and provider time.
    - The other way EMS will be needed is administering vaccines to those unable to get to clinics, starting with those identified by Vermont's home health organizations. We hope to contract with EMS agencies, giving them a list of nearby homebound people, a supply of vaccines, and a time frame, and agency personnel can administer vaccines while not on calls using a community paramedicine approach.
    - The Office of EMS will host a second call for agency heads who want more details tomorrow at 15:00. A meeting invite was sent via email yesterday, and another will be sent tomorrow morning.
- As we think about vaccinations and the next phase of our response to COVID-19, it's important to remember the 55 EMS providers who lost their lives to COVID-19 in the United States, many of whom weren't elderly nor had

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pre-existing conditions. Remember them and honor their memory by continuing to be vigilant with COVID-19 precautions and protecting yourselves.

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### III. SEOC Overview/VEM Comments: DPS Deputy Commissioner Chris Herrick

- I'd like to start with a non-COVID item. The Department of Public Safety is working very closely with the city of Montpelier, Vermont Capitol Police, and other partners to prepare for potential protests over the next few days during the presidential transition of power. Not a lot of detail can be shared, but I do want to pass along that planning is underway and we're working to be prepared for all eventualities. We've planned for events like this in the past. If you are aware of a specific threat, please reach out to the Department of Public Safety.
  - **SEOC status:** The SEOC remains activated every weekday from 0800 until 1600. On weekends the SEOC is in monitoring status, meaning the watch officer is the point of contact for any resource needs that arise. The SEOC is entirely virtual.
  - **SEOC active missions that have been progressing this week:**
    - The newly enacted coronavirus relief act includes \$1.5 billion nationally for an additional round of the Farmers-to-Families Food Box Program through April. The program will be divided into two phases, with the first phase running from late January through the end of February, and the second phase running from March through April. 14,000 food boxes have been allocated to Vermont for the first phase.
      - Contract awards are expected by January 19<sup>th</sup>, and the Vermont Foodbank expects to receive its first distribution of food boxes in February.
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### IV. Vermont League of Cities and Towns: Public Policy and Advocacy Director Karen Horn

- Bill [H.48](#), approved by both chambers of Vermont's legislature and on its way to the governor's desk, would give municipalities the option to mail town meetings day ballots to all registered voters and/or to postpone the date that local elections take place.
  - Even if ballots are sent to every voter, communities would still need to accommodate in-person voting by ballot on Town Meeting Day.
  - While specific guidance is likely forthcoming, municipalities should expect to follow the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's general guidance for businesses (e.g., only using 50% indoor capacity, assuring physical distancing, masking).
  - The legislation also authorizes Vermont's Secretary of State to order additional measures as the pandemic warrants.
- The state legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee already authorized up to \$2 million to pay for mailing Australian ballots.
- We received a question about the rules surrounding town meetings, and how to best reach residents without computer access if meetings are held online.
  - ACCD is working on guidance for town meeting with the Governor's office.
  - Remote Town Meetings will not be allowed due to computer access concerns. The exception is in Brattleboro where a remote Town Meeting will be allowed.

### **V. Questions from Call Participants**

- Municipalities are not required to have in-person town meetings. Instead, they can conduct all needed business through Australian ballots. Given the projected spread of COVID-19, the best options are either using Australian ballots or postponing town meeting day. Virtual town meetings are not allowed, due to access issues.
- The Department of Public Safety is not aware of much in the way of specific threats made against Vermont targets in the coming days. Deputy Commissioner Herrick assured the call participants that if a threat was made against a specific town, that town would be notified.
- The prioritization of essential workers (e.g., public works, parking enforcement) has not been fully decided. However, vaccinations will largely be administered according to age. The governor will address this topic at his press conference tomorrow.
- The Departments of Health and Public Safety are working on new guidance for first response operations as vaccinations continue. The percentage of individuals, currently around 17%, refusing vaccination complicates the process. It is likely that many protective measures will stay in place.