

5/14/20 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.
 - On today's call we have VDH Deputy Commissioner Tracy Dolan; EMS Chief Dan Batsie; and Vermont Fire Academy Chief Pete Lynch. Vermont State Police Captain Roger Farmer, Lauri McGivern from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and Karen Horn from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns are also on the call to answer any questions. We will be providing you all an overview of the State's response to COVID-19 and 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.
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II. **COVID-19 Overview/VDH Comments:** Deputy Commissioner Tracy Dolan

- The state continues to significantly expand COVID-19 testing, with a focus on healthcare workers, childcare providers, and first responders. But testing is also expanded beyond that, with pop-up clinics open to the asymptomatic public.
 - While testing for symptomatic individuals is still based on referrals, asymptomatic individuals can sign up for one of the following pop-up testing dates without a referral:
 - 5/14: Brattleboro (registration full)
 - 5/16: Hartford and Colchester (registration full)
 - 5/18: Rutland
 - 5/19: Barre
 - 5/20: Middlebury and St. Albans
 - 5/21: Newport
 - 5/22: Springfield and Morrisville
 - 5/23: St. Johnsbury
 - Each site can accommodate 300 to 400 people, and the spots are filling up.
 - For more information on pop-up testing, and to sign up, visit <https://humanresources.vermont.gov/popups>
- VDH recently released [childcare and summer camp guidance](#).
- VDH is working with hospitals to resume more procedures. This process will be gradual, and will include plans to test staff for COVID-19.

EMS Update: EMS Chief Dan Batsie

- We received a question about why the testing pop-up sites are beneficial, when it doesn't reveal past infections nor protect against future infections.
 - Testing a swath of asymptomatic Vermonters helps us establish a statistical baseline for the spread of COVID-19 in the state, as well as identifying asymptomatic carriers. Aggressive testing lets us interrupt viral transmission.
- The 2020 protocol update is ready for its May 15th debut.

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- The Division of Fire Safety recently released [guidance](#) on the resumption of fire/EMS non-emergency activities.
 - Similarly, [Office of EMS guidance](#) released last week allows for in-person training, with limitations.
 - Next week is EMS week – we can't celebrate as normal, but will carry on as best we can, with awards and social media projects. Details on EMS week were in yesterday's weekly EMS email.
 - The Office of EMS is continuing to work on its hybrid EMT class. The Office is evaluating options, and should send a recommendation to the EMS Advisory Committee within a couple of weeks. The goal is to start the EMT class in late June.
 - We received a question about contact tracing from a local fire department. What is considered close contact if PPE is on during contact?
 - VDH is working hard not just to test for COVID-19, but also to follow up with contact tracing. Epidemiologists interview those who test positive for COVID-19, to alert those who have been in close contact with the case. This includes first responders. It's important for first responders to include the names of all crew members on run reports. VDH uses both the interview and a search of the SIREN database to identify whether COVID-19 patients were in contact with first responders.
 - Those who have been in contact with a case of COVID-19, including first responders, must self-isolate for 14 days. Contact is generally defined as being within 6 feet of a COVID-19 patient. However, being close to a COVID-19 patient is not considered a "contact" unless the exposure promotes transmission. In other words, being within 6 feet of a COVID-19 patient while wearing full PPE does not count as a contact. Only if there was insufficient PPE, or a PPE failure, would the encounter be considered as a contact.
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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.
- Yesterday, the Office of the Governor amended addendum 6 of the executive order, enabling the ACCD Secretary to authorize limited, incremental and phased resumption of business, non-profit, and government operations, in consultation with the Commissioner of Health and the approval of the Governor.
- Over the past week, the following reopening measures were announced, with specifics expected at tomorrow's 11am press conference:
 - Childcare programs, including summer camps, can resume June 1st, with a transition period for staff starting May 18th. The Department of Health [released guidance](#) for childcare programs, summer camps, and afterschool programs, including details on mask use, class size, cleaning, and food preparation.
 - A gradual reopening of retail stores will begin May 18th.
 - Lodging establishments can reopen, with stringent public health measures, on May 22nd. Reservations between May 22nd and June 15th are only permitted for in-state visitors, or out-of-state visitors who completed a 14-day self-isolation period.
- There is sector-specific guidance on the ACCD website under [Resources for Businesses](#). For questions that cannot be answered by the website, use the "[request additional guidance](#)" form or call 802-461-5143.

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- The overarching executive order will continue past 15th. There are certain components that will be changed, but many will be extended into June. The extension is expected to be announced at tomorrow's 11am press conference.
- 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, the Vermont National Guard, the Agency of Transportation, and the Agency of Agriculture, Farms, and Markets are distributing food to those in need at distribution points to ease demand on food shelves around the state.

- Box meal distribution will occur throughout the rest of May:

Date	Town	Location
5/15	Barre, VT	Edward F Knapp State Airport
5/19	Peru, VT	Bromley Mountain
5/20	Middlebury, VT	Middlebury State Airport
5/21	Thetford, VT	Thetford Academy
5/22	Morristown, VT	Morrisville-Stowe State Airport
5/26	Burlington area	TBD
5/27	Brattleboro area	TBD
5/28	Swanton, VT	Franklin County State Airport
5/29	Lyndonville, VT	Caledonia County State Airport

- Each recipient will receive 1 box of 10-15 non-perishable meals, and each household will receive dairy, produce, and poultry products. These latter items are from the Abbey Group, through a USDA grant called the Farmers to Families Food Box Program.
- 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 MREs are available upon request to local Emergency Management Directors with emergent needs in their town. To request this resource, call the SEOC.

- **Disaster Declaration - DR 4532**

- We received a question about whether emergency cleanouts of sewer systems (a by-product of everyone staying at home and disposing of cleaning wipes and grease down their drains) would be an eligible expense under FEMA Public Assistance.
 - Municipalities should document such expenses and include them in their Public Assistance application. However, keep in mind that it may be denied and Public Assistance applications must reach the \$3,300 threshold.
- More information on how to apply and eligible costs can be found on the VEM website at: vem.vermont.gov/covid19/disaster.

- We got a question on how municipalities should handle out-of-state paving contractors. What are the quarantine restrictions if contractors plan on spending the night in Vermont? What are the restrictions if they are not planning overnight lodging and are instead traveling into Vermont on a daily basis?

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- ACCD clarified their guidance yesterday, specifying that out-of-state workers can commute to job sites, but cannot stay overnight unless doing essential work or with an exemption from ACCD.
 - Commuting out-of-state workers are subject to the same guidance on outdoor work as Vermonters, such as work crews limited to 10 or fewer people.
 - Generally speaking, questions about how the executive order impacts businesses (including road crews) should be directed to the ACCD, either via the “request additional guidance” form on their website, or by calling 802-461-5143.
- We continue to get questions on limiting summer gatherings, especially at swimming holes. We hear that towns are worried both about virus transmission and resource-intensive rescue operations for injured swimmers.
 - Summer gatherings, especially swimming holes, present localized and difficult challenges. Whether the gathering spot is on public or private land, parking availability, access to the site, and law enforcement contracts all influence the approach a municipality may take. There is not a one-size-fits-all overarching state measure that can address these concerns.
 - Possible tactics to limit crowds include talking to landowners to post signage, either limiting or prohibiting visitation, limiting parking, posting on social media, and passing ordinances if the site is accessed via town roads (but be mindful of the enforcement piece). The best enforcement is education, such as signage and putting notes on vehicles.
 - If there’s access to swimming hole off a state highway, people are already prohibited from parking along state highways in a way that impacts travel. The local road foreman or selectboard can reach out to the local Agency of Transportation district to talk about adding signage to enforce this prohibition.
 - Recent changes to the executive order relaxed rules on recreation. While no more than 10 people are allowed in a given location, that rule can be tough to monitor and enforce.
 - Law enforcement contracts (e.g., with sheriffs) can be amended to address monitoring gatherings.
 - Consider distributing [this guidance](#) from the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation.
 - The SEOC is working with Regional Planning Commissions and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to craft guidance about authorities and tools available to towns for education and enforcement of the executive order.

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

- There is [new guidance](#) on resuming fire/EMS non-emergency activities, based on addendum 13 of the executive order. It is important for fire/EMS chiefs to read the guidance in its entirety.
- DFS will send out its next biweekly survey tomorrow. Responding to this survey greatly helps the SEOC.
- The Fire Academy introduced Fire Training Friday, a self-guided training program.
- DFS is thankful to the Vermont fire departments that submitted AFG grants despite being really busy.

V. QUESTIONS FROM CALL PARTICIPANTS

- Results from the pop-up testing sites should be available within 48 hours. Positive cases are called, while negative cases are sent a letter.

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- There have not been any documented cases of [pediatric multisystem inflammatory syndrome](#) in Vermont, but it is on the Department of Health's radar. Despite the media attention, the condition is relatively rare. Pediatric multisystem inflammatory syndrome doesn't always present alongside COVID-19, but the two diseases are connected somehow. There have not been any serious pediatric COVID-19 cases in Vermont.
- There is a state serology working group looking into the efficacy and use of antibody testing. The current serology tests available are not strong. The poor reliability of these tests led to poor decision making in jurisdictions that have used them. The FDA is evaluating serology tests, and as soon as the FDA finds a test offering high validity, Vermont will use it. The state's serologic testing strategy is under development.
 - Because of the low reliability, be skeptical of serology tests offered by private companies, even if it's a Vermont company.