

12/17/20 Municipal & First Responder Call Notes

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

- Welcome participants on the call.
- This is the weekly call for first responders, EMDs, RPCs, and municipal officials.
- The next call will be on Wednesday, December 23rd at 3pm, a change in both date and time. The invitation will go out on Monday, December 21st. The following call will also be on Wednesday, before we return to our normal schedule.
- 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 myself and DEPRIP Director Dan Batsie. In addition, we have Vermont State Police Captain Mike Manley, Vermont League of Cities and Towns Public Policy and Advocacy Director Karen Horn, and Fire Academy Chief Peter 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. **Winter storm update**
- III. **COVID-19/VDH overview**
- IV. **SEOC overview/VEM comments**
- V. **Q&A with participants**

II. **Winter Storm Update:** VEM Director Erica Bornemann

- As of 10:05 AM, a band of heavy snow continues to affect Rutland and Windsor Counties in south central Vermont. This band is slowly moving to the north and west, however **the heaviest snow remains along and south of Route 4**. Windsor and Ludlow have over 40" of snow with an additional 4" to 6" expected. Snowfall rates between 1 to 2 inches per hour are likely in this band, resulting in very poor visibility and rapid snow accumulation. Expect heavy snowfall to persist across these areas for the next hour or two before slowly tapering off. We can expect quieter weather over the next few days.
- I-91 Northbound is closed due to a tractor trailer accident.
- The Windsor EOC is partially activated for this event. No resource requests have been made to the SEOC thus far.
- Towns that anticipate local and neighboring road crew resources will be inadequate for route-clearing during snowstorms should reach out to the SEOC preemptively. Mutual aid may be unavailable during a large storm. It can be more challenging to send help during a storm than staging resources before a storm based on anticipated needs.

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

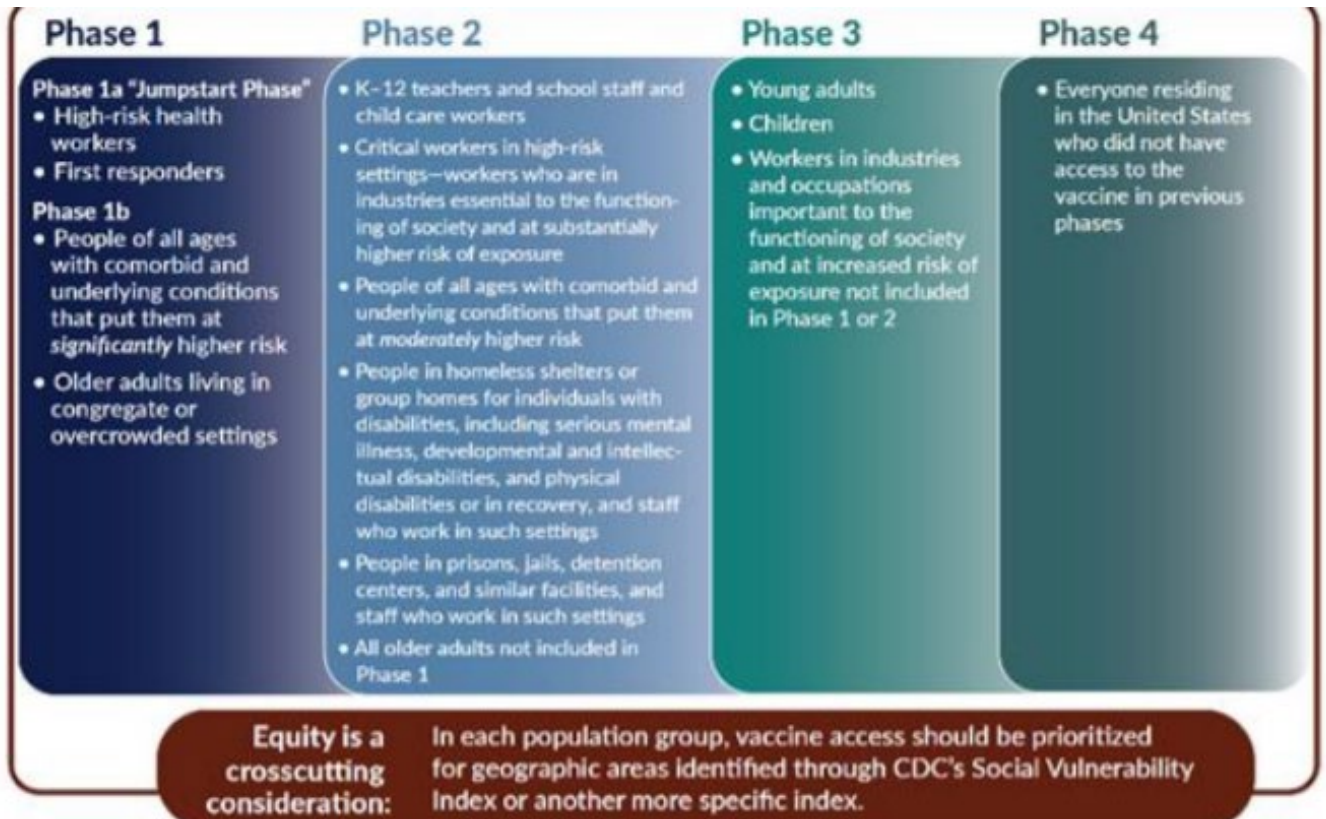
- Overall update on COVID-19 in Vermont
 - 140 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Vermont today; 736 cases were reported in the last week, down from 771 the week prior. There have been 3,045 cases in the last 30 days.
 - The test positivity rate is 2.1%, a decrease from a week ago when it was 2.8%.
 - There have now been over 100 deaths associated with COVID-19 in Vermont, including 14 in the last week and 30 in the last 30 days. Most deaths have been at long-term care facilities.

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- There are currently 22 people hospitalized with COVID-19, 8 of whom are in the ICU and 1 of whom is on a ventilator. These numbers have stayed stable over the last few weeks.
- The Department of Health is managing many outbreaks and situations, including 3 new outbreaks and 32 situations today. These are at schools, businesses, public buildings, etc.
- Testing/tracing updates
 - Testing is ramping up. There are 16 local test sites today.
 - The State is testing around 5,000 people a day, which provides good data and the ability to react to outbreaks, especially when vulnerable populations are involved.
 - The Department of Health is conducting lots of rapid response testing – almost all Department testing efforts are centered on long-term care facilities, while the private contractor CIC health runs the regular local testing centers.
 - The State is working on a system to offer priority at testing sites for first responders, allowing for a degree of surveillance testing. The registration system is still being worked out, because they're trying to incorporate a mechanism for unfilled first responder slots to open back up to the general public. Also, keep in mind that any first responder can still sign up as a member of the general public for the time being.
 - The Department of Health is creating a formal response mechanism for first response agencies with operational challenges due to COVID-19 exposures and quarantines. Such agencies should contact the Watch Officer, who will put the agency in touch with the Health Operations Center (HOC). The HOC will help triage the event, and use epidemiological and testing resources to restore operational capacity.
 - This is NOT a concierge testing service, letting agencies cut the line to get testing (e.g., following an out-of-state vacation). If the need isn't emergent, use the normal local testing sites.
 - Resources could include testing conducted at the station or reservations at a local testing site.
 - Please also know that there will be some situations where there's nothing the HOC can do; guidance can't be circumvented and testing isn't always meaningful.
- Vaccination updates
 - The first COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in Vermont, as part of phase 1a. The vaccines have been delivered to every hospital.
 - Phase 1a includes front-line healthcare workers, such as EMS providers. Hospitals receive the vaccines for this group, and make arrangements with their staff and nearby healthcare workers including home health aides and EMS providers. Hospitals are setting up their own distribution systems, so the specifics will look different, but if you're an EMS provider, your local hospital will be working with your agency to get you access to the vaccine.
 - The vaccine shipments received by Vermont are limited, but arrive every week. The State hopes its weekly allotment will increase in January.

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- As vaccine administration continues into later phases, the eligible populations will expand. The details are still being worked out, but road crews and other essential municipal workers will likely fall into phase 2, depending on their job responsibilities and their COVID-19 risk. We will get out more information as soon as we can.



- We're getting many questions about side effects and risks of the vaccine. The Department of Health is developing a [vaccine resource webpage](#) with specific vaccine information as it's released.
- The State is establishing a personnel pool for vaccine points of distribution (PODs), likely to open in January. This pool includes EMS providers. So far, 28 Vermont EMS agencies expressed interest in participating. The Department of Health is creating contracts with these agencies, and onboarding will take place in the next few days.
- EMS providers (now including EMTs) will be able to administer the COVID-19 vaccine, thanks to an amendment to the protocols. EMTs will need specific credentialing.
- EMS updates
 - Shout out to Burlington Fire Department. Last week, there were concerns of exposure after working a COVID-positive patient in cardiac arrest. There were many providers on scene, but everyone was wearing the proper PPE so no quarantine or other follow-up was required. Two other Vermont EMS agencies found themselves in similar situations, but not everyone was wearing the correct PPE, leading to staff quarantines and an impact on operational capacity.
 - The Office of EMS is working hard to administer the EMS workforce stabilization grant. A FAQ document went out to EMS agencies today. Guidance is changing rapidly. If you have questions, reach out to the Office of EMS.

IV. SEOC Overview/VEM Comments: VEM Director Erica Bornemann

- **SEOC status:** The SEOC remains activated every weekday from 0800 until 1600. On the 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.
- **Recent policy updates:**
 - On Tuesday, Governor Scott [extended the Executive Order and State of Emergency](#) for another month, until January 15. We anticipate that the Executive Order and State of Emergency will stay in place until COVID-19 public health restrictions are lifted.
 - Vermont Alert, a system used for public notification for emergency situations, will now allow users to register for COVID-specific alerts and information. Information sent to those users will mostly consist of changes to the Governor's executive order and other important COVID-19 protective action recommendations. Users can go to vtalert.gov to change subscription preferences to receive COVID-19 updates. To do this, add the "COVID Information" and "COVID Alerts" to your subscription under the "Health Information" tab.
 - Content will include emergency information that impacts the health and welfare of Vermonters; changes to and reminders of current guidance; and vaccine distribution information, such as who is eligible and where clinics are.
 - These won't be day-to-day updates, just important changes.
- **SEOC active missions progressing this week:**
 - The Vermont Foodbank will continue a version of the Farmers-to-Families Food Box Program for January and February. Planning is still underway, and more details will be shared as they become available. The current Farmers-to-Families program is ongoing through December 31st. Reservations for the entire month of December are available on www.dhr.vermont.gov/food-help.
 - Vaccine distribution updates
 - The Medical Counter Measures Warehouse and the Vaccine Depot are receiving COVID-19 vaccine shipments from the federal government and distributing the vaccines to hospitals. The Vaccine Depot is the main redistribution site for local partners without their own cold-chain storage. The SEOC is working with the Department of Health, the Vermont National Guard, and the Agency of Transportation on the logistics.
 - The first shipment of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine [arrived in Vermont](#) on Monday, and vaccine administration started Tuesday. The first phase of vaccination will prioritize high-risk health care workers and long-term care facility residents and staff.
 - Vermont will receive allocations of 5,850 vaccine doses each week of December, with potential for larger quantities after the New Year based on vaccine availability.
 - Vaccinations for healthcare workers are being distributed by state government (most notably the Vermont National Guard and the Agency of Transportation) and administered by hospitals.
 - The federal government is working directly with the Federal Pharmacy Program to distribute and administer vaccines at long-term care facilities, starting December 21.

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- The State placed a pre-order for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, pending FDA emergency use authorization of the vaccine. Vermont could potentially see 11,400 doses of this vaccine next week. All told, there could be almost 34,000 doses in Vermont by the end of the month.
 - The SEOC is working to support the Department of Health to establish different courses of action for COVID-19 vaccine open points of distribution (PODs).
 - Emergency service organizations with service interruptions due to COVID-19 should reach out to the SEOC. Our Safety and Security Branch is focused on helping with exactly these sorts of requests. The SEOC can be reached 24/7 at: 800-347-0488.
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V. Questions from Call Participants

- Scientists at the Department of Health reviewed the CDC's shortened quarantine guidance (from 14 to 10 days), and decided that Vermont will not follow suit for the time being. However, the State's quarantine guidance may change later. Also, please note that Vermont's guidance allows for quarantine to be cut short with a negative test after 7 days.
- Folks receiving a COVID-19 test or vaccine may be asked about their insurance. Dan Batsie will follow up on whether the insurance is charged, but both these services are free to the recipient and insurance is not needed to receive them.
- The State has to get the EMS workforce stabilization grant payments out by the end of the year, but the receiving agencies do not have a specific deadline for disbursing the money to their providers.
- While there currently is not a COVID-19 vaccine approved for children, guidance may change as more trials are conducted and more vaccines are in the process of being approved. There is more information to come. Different vaccines might be better for different populations.