

5/21/20 Municipal & First Responder Call Outline and Talking Points

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

- 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.
 - Today's call features Senator Patrick Leahy, who wanted a chance to speak to all of you on the frontlines of Vermont's COVID-19 response.
 - Also on today's call we will hear from VDH Deputy Commissioner Tracy Dolan; EMS Chief Dan Batsie; and Karen Horn from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. In addition, we have Major Whitcomb from the Vermont State Police and Chief Pete Lynch and Director Mike Desrochers with the Division of Fire Safety available to answer questions. We will be providing you all an overview of Vermont'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.
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II. **COVID-19 Overview/VDH Comments:** EMS Chief Dan Batsie

- In the last week, there have been 9 new cases of COVID-19 and 1 death related to COVID-19. These numbers are much lower than they were in March. This is not to say that the risk went away – there is still plenty of COVID-19 in our communities. We still need aggressive monitoring to prevent spread and outbreaks.
- The State is currently implementing an offense-minded testing strategy, with the goal of conducting 1,000 COVID-19 tests per day. This benchmark is based on research suggesting that at least 152 of 100,000 people in a jurisdiction must be tested daily in order to monitor viral spread.
 - Yesterday, for the first time, the State did indeed test over 1,000 Vermonters. The next step is to get primary care providers and hospitals to more aggressively test patients without COVID-19 symptoms, as well as offering tests at locations like pharmacies and Wal-Mart. We want to test everyone who wants a test.
 - Testing for symptomatic individuals is still based on health care provider referrals. In addition, there are ongoing pop-up testing sites, for asymptomatic individuals without a referral:
 - 5/21: Newport (FULL)
 - 5/22: Springfield and Morrisville
 - 5/23: St. Johnsbury
 - For more information on pop-up testing, and to sign up, visit <https://humanresources.vermont.gov/popups>
- We are urging owners and managers of buildings that have been closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to take steps that can prevent illnesses associated with stagnant water in plumbing systems.
 - Stagnant water can lead to the growth of Legionella and other bacteria, which can cause Legionnaires' disease or other diseases. Stagnant water can also cause corrosion of plumbing — which can release metals such as lead and copper into the water — or lead to an increase in disinfection byproducts.
 - To ensure your facility is safe, take these steps before re-occupancy:

5/21/20 Municipal & First Responder Call Outline and Talking Points

- Develop a water management plan — this should reflect the building’s unique characteristics and include actions like flushing pipes regularly and ensuring water is kept at the proper temperature.
 - Check the system integrity — Inspect mechanical and plumbing components and check wastewater systems.
 - Flushing — Running water through the system clears out the old, low-quality water that accumulated during low or no use.
 - Yesterday, VDH updated its [PPE guidelines for EMS providers](#).
 - Over the last month, Vermont’s PPE guidelines for EMS providers have been a step above CDC recommendations. Because Vermont has had several episodes of EMS providers failing to identify COVID-19 patients, the state was recommending “full PPE” on all EMS calls (i.e., a respirator, eye protection, gloves, and a gown).
 - However, as the infection rate in Vermont slowed, the Office of EMS asked the state’s epidemiologists to look at that PPE standard. There was agreement to revert back to the CDC recommendations, which is to reserve “full PPE” for positive or suspected cases of COVID-19. Otherwise, eye protection, gloves, and a face mask constitute sufficient PPE on medical calls.
 - The Vermont 2020 EMS protocol updates are live. Links to training on the updates have been emailed out. EMS agencies can use the new protocols as soon as their providers are trained.
 - Two protocol updates requiring in-person training – splinting for EMRs and surgical airways for paramedics – will not be implemented until physical distancing restrictions relax.
 - EMS agencies can resume limited in-person training, as long as [precautions are taken](#), such as having 10 or fewer people in one location.
 - It is okay to staff an ambulance with more than two people, if needed operationally. As an essential service, ambulances responding to emergencies are exempt from the VOSHA limitation of only 2 workers in a vehicle. However, please continue to limit crew sizes as feasible.
 - Also, happy EMS Week!
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III. SEOC Overview/ VEM Comments: Deputy Commissioner Chris Herrick

- **SEOC status**
 - The SEOC is fully activated Monday through Friday from 0800 until 1600, and partially activated on the weekends. The SEOC is now fully virtual.
- Yesterday, Governor Scott announced a proposed \$400 million relief package for Vermont businesses, funded through the federal CARES Act. The package will need to pass the state legislature before implementation.
 - The two-phase proposal will start with \$310 million for immediate relief to the most impacted sectors and businesses to be followed by \$90 million for long-term recovery efforts.
 - The Phase 1 relief package will involve financial assistance, housing assistance, technical assistance, and marketing support.
 - The Agency of Commerce and Community Development will be holding a series of webinars in the days ahead to further talk about the plan.
 - More information on this proposed package is on the [ACCD website](#).
- Yesterday, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development released [new guidance](#) that:

5/21/20 Municipal & First Responder Call Outline and Talking Points

- Allowed outdoor dining at restaurants if precautions are taken (effective tomorrow)
- Specified that pools, beaches, and yard sales can reopen/resume if precautions are taken
- Added detail on mandatory Reopening and Training Plans
- Clarified that those commuting into and out of Vermont do not need to quarantine, while specifying restrictions for travelers in other categories
- There are a couple of other items that took effect or will be taking effect this week.
 - A gradual reopening of retail stores began on May 18th with specific requirements, one of which is that all employees must wear masks.
 - Some municipalities, such as Burlington and Brattleboro, have extended this requirement to all customers in municipal buildings and retail establishments.
 - Lodging establishments can reopen, with stringent public health measures, starting tomorrow. This will be available to Vermonters and people from out-of-state who certify they have completed a 14-day quarantine prior to traveling to Vermont.
- 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 or call 802-461-5143.
- **SEOC active missions that have been progressing this week:**
 - The Alternate Care Site in Barre will be demobilized on Tuesday. That will leave one active Alternate Care Site in Chittenden County, and two other sites in standby.
 - The Vermont Foodbank and Vermont National Guard is 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
5/21	Thetford, VT	Thetford Academy
5/22	Morristown, VT	Lamoille Union High School
5/26	Burlington area	VT Route 127, Southbound
5/27	Brattleboro area	Brattleboro Union High School
5/28	Swanton, VT	Franklin County State Airport
5/29	Lyndonville, VT	Caledonia County State Airport
 - There have been concerns about wait times and supply at these distribution sites, so let me clarify that, while we aim for everyone to receive food, some supplies will run out sooner, especially of perishable food.
 - The staff at the sites will improve how they announce when different items run out, such as using electronic message boards.
 - We predict that as these distributions continue, fewer people will show up and wait times will go down.
 - Further information, including a complete listing of dates and times, will be updated on VEM's website: <https://vem.vermont.gov/pods>
- **Disaster Declaration - DR 4532**

5/21/20 Municipal & First Responder Call Outline and Talking Points

- Information on how to apply and eligible costs can be found on the VEM website at: vem.vermont.gov/covid19/disaster.
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IV. Vermont League of Cities and Towns – Karen Horn

- [Addendum 14](#) of the executive order lets municipalities enact local requirements regarding mask use – Burlington and Brattleboro did so via emergency orders.
 - 20 VSA section 16 speaks to municipal authority to make rules and regulations necessary for emergency management:
 - “The towns and cities of the state and other agencies designated or appointed by the governor are authorized and empowered to make, amend and rescind such orders, rules, and regulations as may be necessary for emergency management purposes and to supplement the carrying out of the provisions of this chapter, but not inconsistent with any orders, rules or regulations promulgated by the governor or by any state agency exercising a power delegated to it by him or her.” ([20 VSA § 16](#))
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V. Senator Leahy Comments

- Senator Leahy thanked Vermont’s local officials and first responders for their work.
 - He also discussed legislation currently being worked on that includes support for local government.
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VI. QUESTIONS FROM CALL PARTICIPANTS

- There will be a Health Alert coming out within the next day or so with detail on quarantine standards. When it’s posted, it will be available on the [VDH website](#). The [ACCD website](#) also has specifics on how people can certify they have been in quarantine.
- Municipalities can order PPE and other supplies through [state contracts](#).
- Senator Leahy said there are proposals in the senate related to compensating fire/EMS volunteers for COVID-19-related duties.
- There are 65-70 electronic messaging boards around the state displaying the message: “IF YOU COME TO VT TO STAY / ISOLATE 14 DAYS.” The SEOC and Vermont State Police representatives on the call were unaware of any particular Memorial Day weekend efforts to reinforce quarantine requirements.