

4/22/20 First Responder Call Outline

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

- This will be the last weekly call specific to first responders. Starting next week, this call will be combined with the one for local municipalities. Next week's call will be on Thursday April 30th at 2PM. A new invite will be sent out early next week.
- There is [a new survey link](#). The survey has been modified a bit to ask you to identify the theme for your question. Also, 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, and we use your questions to guide our talking points.
- Notes from previous calls can be found at: <https://vem.vermont.gov/COVID19FirstResponders>

II. **SEOC Update:** Deputy Commissioner Chris Herrick

- Preliminary data suggest COVID-19 cases could be plateauing in Vermont. We are cautiously optimistic, but need to emphasize that social distancing, as well as response and protection measures, are still needed to ensure we continue on this downward trend.
- As you are all aware, the SEOC is fully activated from 0800 until 1600 every day. The SEOC is now almost fully virtual, with only call takers stationed at Public Safety Headquarters.
- On Monday, Addendum 10 of the executive order went into effect, allowing for a phased reopening of businesses in Vermont, and mandatory health & safety guidance that will be required of all businesses currently operating and those re-starting.
 - The mandatory health & safety requirements for all business operations includes the following:
 - Not reporting to work if sick
 - Employees must observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on the job
 - Employees must wear non-medical cloth face coverings over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others.
 - There must be easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer during the duration of work, and handwashing or hand sanitization should be required before entering, and leaving, job sites.
 - Frequent cleaning of all common spaces
 - No more than two people occupying one vehicle when conducting work
 - Customers, and the public in general, are encouraged to wear cloth face coverings any time they are interacting with others outside their household.
 - Business operations deemed "essential" may continue to operate under pre-existing guidance with the addition of the mandatory health and safety requirements for all business operations, which I outlined above.
 - The business reopening is a phased process that is being driven by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Vermont Department of Health, and the Department of Public Safety as directed by Governor Scott. Subject to the mandatory health and safety requirements stated above, and with some additional guidance, the following operations were allowed to restart beginning on Monday:
 - Outdoor Businesses & Construction Operations
 - Retail Operations; all orders must occur over the phone; no in-store transactions re allowed at this time.
 - Low- or no-contact professional services such as appraisers, realtors, municipal clerks, attorneys, property managers, pet care operators, and others.
 - Farmers markets will be allowed to reopen May 1. Additional guidance is currently being drafted by the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets.

4/22/20 First Responder Call Outline

- Additional information and specific guidance for the phased reopening can be found on ACCD's website.
 - Any questions about businesses reopening should be directed to ACCD, using the "[request additional guidance](#)" form on their website, or emailing ACCD.Covid19@vermont.gov (but please look around their website for guidance first)
 - Active SEOC missions:
 - Starting today and continuing throughout the next week or so, the Vermont Foodbank and Vermont National Guard will distribute food to those in need. These points of distribution will help ease demand on food shelves around the state that have seen a surge in demand.
 - The National Guard will set up and operate these Points of Distribution (PODs) at state airports in Swanton, North Clarendon, Newport, Bennington, and North Springfield on separate days over the next two weeks.
 - Those in need of food can go to these locations on the appointed days and receive a seven-day supply of Meals Ready-to-Eat (MRE) for each member of their household.
 - The need for supplemental distribution is being assessed on a week-by-week basis. Supply chains are strong to food shelves and Vermont grocery stores are not experiencing shortages in most food items.
 - Further information, including a complete listing of dates and times, can be found on VEM's website: <https://vem.vermont.gov/pods>
 - The SEOC Joint Information Center has 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. This information can be found at: <https://vem.vermont.gov/covid19/facecovering>
 - Cloth face coverings are recommended anytime people are interacting with people outside of their household. This advice is based on new data about how COVID-19 can spread before a person has any symptoms. A mask helps you protect others around you if you are infected and don't know it.
 - An update on PPE from the SEOC Medical Logistics Branch:
 - All PPE orders are being coordinated out of the SEOC Med Logs branch; orders should be placed through the online form on the VDH website.
 - The Med Logs Branch reports we have been short-stocked on gowns, aprons, and goggles – all of those have been ordered.
 - Hand sanitizer is now stocked.
 - UVM provided the state with a small supply of goggles for emergent needs, while the state works on ordering more.
 - The recommendation is to keep a 14-day supply of PPE on hand and submit an order online when running low.
-

III. COVID-19 Overview and VDH/EMS Comments: EMS Chief Dan Batsie

- Although the COVID-19 infection rate is trending in a positive direction, please be careful, there's still a lot of virus out there.
- With guidance from the advisory committee, VDH decided that the 2020 protocol update will go live on May 15th. The accompanying training will be entirely online. It is up to each

4/22/20 First Responder Call Outline

agency to assure that their staff complete the training before implementing the protocol updates.

- The date for completing the training and implemented the updates has been pushed back to 9/30, in recognition of the challenges EMS providers may face in completing the training.
- Two specific protocol updates – a splinting and spinal immobilization protocol for EMRs and an open surgical airway protocol for paramedics – will be put on hold because they are not amenable to online training. Once COVID-19 restrictions loosen, there will be in-person training for these two new protocols.
- VDH is working fast and furious on developing an online EMT class and is currently looking at potential vendors. VDH hopes to start an online EMT class by the end of June, with hands-on training and clinical experience following when COVID-19 restrictions loosen. The in-person training will occur in regional cohorts. Details are forthcoming.
- VDH is working with SCORE Vermont, an organization that does small business mentoring, to provide leadership resources to EMS agencies. As part of this effort, there will likely be a webinar in the coming weeks about managing finances in the age of COVID-19. There is general information about SCORE on [the VTEMS website](#); more information is forthcoming.
- EMS data:
 - VDH is grateful to everyone for participating in the department's data collection efforts. On Friday, VDH published a [snapshot of absenteeism in Vermont EMS](#); there has been no catastrophic absenteeism so far. Collecting and disseminating this EMS data allows VDH to address issues and also lets colleagues and partners work together to overcome challenges at the local level.
 - On the [VTEMS website](#), there is a summary of the second weekly EMS district survey. This survey asks system-level questions to build an overarching view of the health of Vermont's EMS system.
 - VDH is working hard to increase its EMS data capability. VDH is working with the Agency of Digital Services on a near-real-time COVID-19 dashboard that will show call volume. VDH already published some [analytics on call volume patterns](#).
- EMS agencies with staffing concerns should reach out to VTEMS. Ideally, EMS agencies should work with local resources to fill staffing gaps, but if that fails there are alternatives, such as the Medical Reserve Corps and the National Guard. VTEMS can facilitate accessing such resources.
- Please log any PPE requests using [this form](#). In response to requests, VDH ordered fit test kits, but they are on back order. VDH did however receive fit test solution today; interested EMS agencies should get in touch with Dan Batsie.
- There are N95 decontamination units installed and operational at some Vermont hospitals. VDH is working with the hospitals on developing protocols for first response agencies to drop off and pick up masks from these units. In the interim, do not throw away used N95 masks. Per the [March 27th guidance](#), store used N95 masks so they can be decontaminated as soon as protocols for doing so are in place.

IV. Public Assistance Funding: SEOC Recovery Unit Leader Ben Rose

- Public Assistance eligibility for first response agencies:
 - Public Assistance covers overtime, PPE, and costs associated with hiring temporary employees. It does not cover straight time for current employees.

4/22/20 First Responder Call Outline

- Agencies should apply for Public Assistance even if they are not sure their agency or their costs are eligible – the worst that could happen is rejection.
 - Slides and Q&As from last week's Public Assistance 101 webinars, along with a host of other funding guidance, can be found on VEM's website: <https://vem.vermont.gov/covid19/disaster>
 - Reach out to Kim Canarecci with questions: Kim.Canarecci@vermont.gov
-

V. VSP Comments: Colonel Matthew Birmingham

- Law enforcement staffing is good across the state. There are very few positive COVID-19 tests among Vermont law enforcement.
 - Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) staffing is in a good position. Some staff members are on COVID-19-related leave, such as caring for children home from school. However, case numbers and call volume are both down, allowing PSAPs to operate effectively with less staff than normal.
 - There is a significant drop in calls for service.
 - Addendum 10 of the governor's executive order, which came into effect on Monday, changed the Stay Home, Stay Safe order and therefore also changed enforcement of the order. The enforcement posture continues to emphasize education and voluntary compliance, with noncompliance referred to the attorney general for potential legal action.
-

VI. DFS Comments: Peter Lynch, Vermont Fire Academy

- DFS weekly survey:
 - The survey results were not that different from those last week. For instance, there was no change in the availability of responders, which is good news.
 - There was no indication in the survey results of a need for more PPE, other than a shortage of gowns in Windsor County. An order of gowns was placed.
 - This week's survey included a question about how helpful these weekly calls are. An overwhelming percentage of chiefs said the calls are important and they would like the calls to continue.
 - The DFS weekly survey has been a valuable tool for the SEOC to gather information and help DFS understand what's happening regionally. Going forward, the survey will go out every other week. The next survey will be sent out May 1st, with a summary of results available on May 5th. The survey may go back to once a week, depending on need.
- DFS has been sending daily situation reports to fire departments, but heard that many first responders are getting the same information from multiple sources. Therefore, DFS will only send out reports on Monday and Friday, while still sharing time sensitive items immediately. Those looking for more regular updates should go to [the DFS website](#), which is updated daily. For specific questions, email or call the DFS staff.
- Classes delayed by social distancing, specifically Fire Instructor and Firefighter I/II, are transitioning to online instruction. Online Fire Instructor classes are already in full swing, while the Firefighter I/II classes will go online within the next week. DFS will make sure everyone can finish the training they started.
- In response to interest in online refresher training, the Fire Academy posted [a list of online training resources](#) on its website. The Fire Academy is also planning on providing a "Training of the Week," to include interdepartmental discussion.
- Leonard Howard and Dean Gilmore are setting up a meeting with staff from Vermont's congressional delegation to discuss financial reimbursement for volunteer first responders.