

5/28/20 Municipal & First Responder Call Notes

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.
 - We added a question to the survey about the longevity of these calls and whether they are meeting your needs. So, regardless of whether you have a question, [please complete the survey](#) within the next week.
 - If we hear that these calls should be less frequent or aren't needed, but the situation changes, we may resume weekly calls as warranted.
 - On today's call we will hear from EMS Chief Dan Batsie and Karen Horn from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. In addition, representatives from the Vermont State Police and the Division of Fire Safety are 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.
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II. **COVID-19 Overview/VDH Comments:** Health Operations Center Incident Commander and EMS Chief Dan Batsie

- Overall update on COVID-19 in Vermont:
 - The state has been averaging three or four new cases of COVID-19 a day, which is a relatively flat curve. Also, there's been only one COVID-19-related death in the past two weeks.
 - Challenges remain, such as the incoming populations of returning college students and summer residents. The state government is preparing and gearing up for next phase of the COVID-19 response.
 - Quarantine is the biggest topic of discussion right now. The current rule is that those entering the state of Vermont (except for commuters and those on comparably short trips) must quarantine for 14 days. After 7 days of quarantine, those without symptoms can get tested; if the test is negative, they can leave quarantine early. This policy may change in the near future.
- Testing/tracing updates
 - The State is consistently conducting over 1,000 COVID-19 tests a day. The testing focus was initially on first responders and health care workers, but that has since shifted to the general public.
 - 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 (we particularly recommend that first responders use these sites). So far, this asymptomatic testing has not revealed many infections, leading to conversations about maybe targeting testing more toward vulnerable populations. For now, asymptomatic testing continues on the following schedule:
 - 5/28: Barre, St. Albans, and Hartford
 - 5/29: Middlebury, St. Johnsbury, Essex, and Barre
 - 5/30: Essex and Barre
 - 6/1: Bennington and Orleans
 - 6/2: Essex and Springfield
 - 6/3: Brattleboro, Morrisville, and Rutland
 - 6/4: Barre, St. Albans, and Hartford

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- 6/5: Middlebury and St. Johnsbury
 - For more information on pop-up testing, and to sign up, visit <https://humanresources.vermont.gov/popups>
 - We got multiple questions about wearing masks in offices. Do people in their own office with a closed door have to wear a mask? Do people sitting further than six feet apart with a partition have to wear masks?
 - In both these scenarios, it's reasonable to remove your mask. However, if you are moving around, please wear a mask, especially in congregated areas. Continue to be diligent.
 - We got a question on why Vermont's approach to antibody testing is different than that of other states.
 - According to recent reporting, up to 50% of serology testing is inaccurate, making its use problematic. There is not enough information yet to know whether COVID-19 antibodies confirm immunity, so we do not want people to think a positive serology test means an end to physical distancing. Also, serology testing does not differentiate between current and past infections. As the science and technology of serology testing develop, the Department of Health continues to reevaluate its stance.
 - EMS updates:
 - The biggest update is that [Vermont EMS PPE guidelines](#) were updated. These guidelines used to exceed the CDC recommendations, because of how hard it is to detect COVID-19. However, as infection rates and the overall risk changed, it became reasonable to go back to aligning with CDC guidelines. The current updated guidance is that first responders should wear surgical masks, eye protection, and gloves during most patient encounters. If there is a reason to suspect COVID-19 (because of symptoms or someone saying they tested positive), then a gown should also be worn. N95 masks are appropriate in the presence of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and during aerosolizing procedures.
 - The new 2020 protocols are in full effect. All materials are on the [Office of EMS website](#). Once everyone in a department is trained on the new protocols, that department can implement the protocols. The deadline for implementation is September, but please complete this process as soon as possible.
 - The Office of EMS and State EMS Medical Director Dan Wolfson will host a Q&A on June 9th at 11am. The link went out in Wednesday's EMS email.
 - Lastly, thank you to the EMS providers supporting COVID-19 testing. Providers from nine EMS agencies have been helping to collect testing specimens, and have been a massive part of the state's offense-minded testing strategy. If it wasn't for this help, Vermont wouldn't be able to conduct as many tests as we need.
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III. SEOC Overview/ VEM Comments: Deputy Commissioner Chris Herrick

- **SEOC status**
 - The SEOC is fully activated during the week from 0800 until 1600, and partially activated on the weekends. The SEOC is fully virtual.
- On Friday, Governor Scott introduced addendum 15 to the executive order, codifying guidance on outdoor food and beverage service. Rules regarding the sale of alcohol for outside consumption have been temporarily loosened.
 - The addendum also cancelled fairs and festivals until further notice.
- Also on Friday, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development updated its reopening guidance, provided that certain health measures are followed:

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- Interior construction in occupied structures can resume
 - Bars, breweries, etc. can offer outdoor beverage service
 - Religious institutions can resume operations at 25% occupancy
 - Hair salons and barbershops can partially reopen tomorrow
- The Governor also authorized additional medical procedures and health services to resume, under the guidance of the Department of Health. This includes inpatient surgeries and procedures; outpatient services, including clinic visits, diagnostic imaging and limited outpatient surgeries and procedures; and elective dental services. Each service area must follow stringent mitigation strategies and a phased implementation timeline, developed in consultation with industry associations and experts.
 - 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 was demobilized. That leaves one active Alternate Care Site in Chittenden County (Essex), and two other sites (Rutland and Burlington) in standby.
 - The Vermont Foodbank and Vermont National Guard are distributing food to those in need at distribution points to ease demand on food shelves around the state.

- The next meal distributions:

Date	Town	Location
5/28	Swanton	Franklin County State Airport
5/29	Lyndonville	Caledonia County State Airport
6/1	Clarendon	Rutland SVT Regional Airport
6/2	Newport	Northeast Kingdom Int'l Airport
6/3	Springfield	Hartness State Airport
6/4	Barre	Edward F Knapp State Airport
6/5	Bennington	William H Morse 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 are improving 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.
 - After these distributions, starting June 8th, daily distributions will only be distributing the Farmers-to-Families perishable meals and will no longer be accompanied by FEMA boxed non-perishable meals.
 - The SEOC is developing a pre-registration form, allowing people to register to attend a distribution site at a particular time. There is no established implementation date for this process yet; more information will be available shortly.
- Further information, including a complete listing of dates and times, will be updated on VEM's website: <https://vem.vermont.gov/pods>

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- **Disaster Declaration - DR 4532**
 - Information on how to apply and eligible costs can be found on the VEM website at: vem.vermont.gov/covid19/disaster.
 - 72% of Vermont municipalities have submitted revised Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs). Municipalities that have not yet submitted LEMPs will not be eligible for grants from Vermont Emergency Management or increased funding from the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) until it is submitted. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact your Regional Planning Commission.
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IV. Vermont League of Cities and Towns – Karen Horn

- Municipalities with questions about work schedules and quarantining when returning to the state may reach out to VLCT's Senior Human Resources Consultant Jill Muhr (jmuhr@vlct.org). There is unfortunately no one-size-fits-all guidance on this issue.
 - We received a question about guidelines for allowing the public into municipal buildings.
 - ACCD guidance applies to the public sector as well as the private sector. The local legislative body has the authority to determine what's appropriate for town offices.
 - If the guidance on the ACCD website doesn't meet your needs, you can use the "[request additional guidance](#)" web inquiry form on the ACCD website or call 802-461-5143.
 - Questions about the COVID-19 Safety and Health Work Plan template developed by VLCT may be directed to Deputy Director Fred Satink (fsatink@vlct.org).
 - VLCT is hopeful that Act [H.951](#), which concerns a municipal emergency statewide education property tax borrowing program, may be on the governor's desk tomorrow.
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V. QUESTIONS FROM CALL PARTICIPANTS

- Per [addendum 13](#) of the executive order, social gatherings, such as those on beaches, should be limited to 10 or fewer people.
- While cloth face coverings are appropriate while in the station or out in the community, EMS providers should wear surgical masks during patient contacts. When transporting a COVID-19 positive patient or performing an aerosolizing procedure, both the person driving the ambulance and those providing care in the back should wear N95 masks, unless the two compartments are completely sealed off (including the HVAC system).
- First responders should familiarize themselves with the [5/26 Health Advisory](#) about N95 mask conservation and sterilization.