

## 4/30/20 Municipal & First Responder Call Notes

### I. Welcome and Introduction:

- This is the first combined call for first responders, EMDs, RPCs, and municipal officials. This combined call replaces the previous Wednesday and Friday calls, and will be each week on Thursday at 2pm going forward.
  - The meeting invitations include a [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.
  - FAQs populated from previous calls 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, added to the list of First Responder Notes.
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### II. COVID-19 Overview/VDH Comments: Deputy Commissioner Tracy Dolan

- Vermont recently has had relatively low incidences of COVID-19. There were zero new cases yesterday (4/29), for the first time since March 9<sup>th</sup>. VDH continues to promote the wearing of masks and cloth face coverings – anecdotally Vermonters have become more relaxed regarding covering their faces and social distancing, which is worrisome.
- **Testing/Tracing updates:** VDH developed some strategies to move toward opening the economy, consisting of increasing testing and contact tracing. Current guidelines ask physicians to refer symptomatic patients for testing, and this has not resulted in many referrals. In order to obtain a clearer picture of the rate of infection, testing will need to be more aggressive. Vermont already has the capacity to expand testing, and will do so in three waves throughout May:
  - Wave #1: Mildly symptomatic cases, including pediatric cases, will continue to be tested, along with more aggressive testing at long-term care facilities (with assistance from EMS agencies), more healthcare staff testing, and testing at Department of Corrections facilities.
  - Wave #2: Testing will be expanded to include outpatients, first responders, and more healthcare personnel (such as home health and hospice workers).
  - Wave #3: Testing will be expanded to include inpatients, childcare providers, summer residents, and returning college students.
  - This plan is still being developed, so other groups may also be included in the more aggressive testing strategy.
  - Increased testing will almost certainly result in a rise of confirmed cases. This will represent a clearer picture of the spread of infection, not an actual worsening of the spread.
  - The increase in testing will be accompanied by more aggressive contact tracing. Contacts may also get tested.

### EMS Update: EMS Chief Dan Batsie

- The EMS Office is working with SCORE Vermont, a nonprofit that provides business mentoring. There will be a webinar coming up, focusing on finance. Details went out in Wednesday’s EMS email.
- The EMS Office is still working on its data dashboard.
- EMS absenteeism is low so far, with only mild impacts in the past week. However, this could change quickly. The EMS Office is working on an EMS strike team, composed of agencies willing to augment coverage in hard-hit areas.
- The 2020 EMS Protocol update will go live by May 15<sup>th</sup>, hopefully sooner.

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- Regarding how recent addenda to the governor's executive order impact emergency response agencies, the EMS Office suggests the same guidance as previously issued:
    - Socially distance as much as practical in stations. Limit congregate space, such as having only one person in the kitchen at a time.
    - Conduct regular cleaning and disinfection.
    - Wear masks or cloth face coverings if close to others, both in the station and on calls.
  - The State continues to send PPE supplies to healthcare workers and first responders. Please project out PPE needs for 2 weeks, and base requests on that.
    - Medical gowns are in short supply; please conserve them per CDC guidelines.
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### III. SEOC Overview/ VEM Comments: SEOC Manager/VEM Director Erica Bornemann

- The **SEOC** is fully activated during the week from 0800 until 1600, and partially activated on the weekends. The SEOC is now fully virtual.
- On Friday, the Governor issued **Addendum 11** to the Executive Order. This addendum:
  - Gives the green light to construction work crews under 5 people to do work in outdoor spaces or in unoccupied structures.
    - We got a question last week about how unoccupied spaces are defined and if this guidance can apply to office work. This has been clarified on the VEM website under the municipal FAQs as well as on the ACCD website: the guidance does not apply to office workers at this point – only construction can occur indoors in groups of five. An unoccupied structure is defined as an uninhabited structure.
  - Addendum 11 allows manufacturing and distribution to resume when there is less than 5 people and the space is large enough to maintain at least 6 feet of distance.
  - It allows outdoor retail facilities such as garden centers and greenhouses to reopen with no more than 10 people at a time, including both staff and customers.
  - A key provision of this addendum is that all employees must be trained in preventing the spread of the virus, that includes the wearing of masks, social-distancing, and regular cleaning of all surfaces.
  - ACCD is providing updated [sector specific guidance](#) located on the ACCD website. Further questions can be directed using the "[request additional guidance](#)" web inquiry form on the ACCD website.
- As outlined previously, **farmers markets** will be allowed to reopen on May 1<sup>st</sup>, but they will not be traditional farmers markets. They will focus on food distribution, not on social gathering. [Guidance](#) and an [FAQ](#) are available on the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets website.
- We got a question about as restrictions ease, **how can workers with children return to work** when schools and childcare are still closed? Will childcare continue into the summer?
  - The state is aware of the issue, and is working through safety and logistical concerns. Guidance will be released on or around May 8<sup>th</sup>.
- We got questions about maintaining and **enforcing social distance as the weather warms**, with swimming holes and restaurant take-out windows of particular concern.
  - The SEOC, the Agency of Natural Resources, the Vermont State Police, and the Joint Information Center are working on planning and messaging for swimming holes.
  - Physical distancing is largely a matter of personal responsibility. It is on every one of us to ensure we are adhering to proper distancing as best as possible. Remind each other. The progress Vermont has made should not lull anyone into a false sense of security.

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- **LEMPS**

- The LEMP deadline is still May 1<sup>st</sup>; municipalities should try to update their LEMPs by May 1<sup>st</sup>. Municipalities that do not submit LEMPs by that date 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.
  - Thus far, 94 municipalities, or 37%, have adopted 2020 Local Emergency Management Plans.

- **SEOC Active missions that have been progressing this week:**

- From April 22nd through May 1st, the Vermont Foodbank, the Vermont National Guard, and the Agency of Transportation distributed food to those in need. These points of distribution helped ease demand on food shelves around the state that have seen a surge in demand.
  - The National Guard and the Agency of Transportation set up and operated Commodity Points of Distribution (CPODs) at state airports in Swanton, North Clarendon, Newport, Bennington, South Hero, and North Springfield on separate days over the past few weeks. Locations were determined by the Vermont Foodbank, based on a higher level of need in those locations.
  - Those in need of food received a seven-day supply of Meals Ready-to-Eat (MRE) for each member of their household.
  - There will be another round of food distribution at 8 to 10 sites, consisting of boxed meals instead of MREs, followed by a return to reliance on local sources. More information on this further distribution will be available soon.
- 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 locally in Vermont. This information can be found at:  
<https://vem.vermont.gov/covid19/facecovering>

- **Disaster Declaration - DR 4532**

- Under the FEMA Public Assistance program, purchasing and providing food is an allowable expense.
- Most municipal and critical-non-profit first response agencies are eligible for reimbursement through FEMA Public Assistance. Such agencies should document their expenses and submit requests.
- More information on how to apply and eligible costs can be found on the VEM website at:  
<https://vem.vermont.gov/covid19/disaster>

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

- To stay within the bounds of the executive order, it's important to continue to suspend trainings and meetings. Given the importance of meetings and trainings to maintain skills and boost morale, DFS suggests holding virtual meetings (which DFS can assist with) and conducting online trainings (the fire academy compiled [a list of online firefighting trainings](#)).
- There is a new \$100 million grant program open to fire departments and “third service” or non-affiliated EMS agencies, called the **Assistance to Firefighters Grant COVID-19 Supplemental Program**, or AFG-S. This is a competitive grant program, and applications are due on May 15th. Details are available on [FEMA's website](#). If you have questions, please reach out to DFS or the SEOC Recovery Unit.
  - This grant is for purchasing PPE and other COVID-19-related supplies. It is completely separate from the normal AFG.
  - This is cost matching: 5% for jurisdictions with a population under 20,000, and 10% for jurisdictions with a population over 20,000.

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- FEMA hosted two webinars about this grant. The first happened today and was [recorded](#) by the fire academy, and the second webinar is on May 6<sup>th</sup> at 2pm (call details are on the [DFS website](#)).
- AFG is providing micro grants for up to \$3,000, which could be helpful for municipalities that have costs but do not meet the FEMA threshold to submit a grant.

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### V. QUESTIONS FROM CALL PARTICIPANTS

- Submitting electronic copies of LEMPs is fine.
- There was a wide-ranging discussion on swimming holes as potential vectors for virus transmission. Posting warnings, increasing police patrols, and limiting parking were all mentioned as potential remedies. Enforcement options may be limited. The SEOC will coordinate with Vermont State Police and the Agency of Transportation on this issue.
- The swimming hole discussion also included talk of appropriate PPE for search-and-rescue and carry-out operations. Batsie said cloth face coverings are appropriate except during actual patient contact. It can also help to send one “scout” provider to make patient contact and decide on 1) the appropriate level of PPE for the other responders and 2) the level of further response needed (e.g., a refusal or an ambulatory patient requires less manpower, and therefore less PPE, than a carry out).