

3/4/21 Municipal & First Responder Call Outline and Talking Points

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 Thursday, March 11th at 2pm. The invitation will go out on Monday, March 8th.
- 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 DEPRIP Director Dan Batsie and Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns Public Policy and Advocacy Director Karen Horn. In addition, we have Vermont State Police Lieutenant Matt Amadon, Fire Academy Chief Pete Lynch, and EMS Chief Will Moran 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 page 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. COVID-19/VDH overview
- III. SEOC overview/VEM comments
- IV. VLCT comments
- V. Q&A with participants

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

- **Overall update on COVID-19 in Vermont**
 - There have been 848 cases of COVID-19 in the last week bringing the total case count to 15,686.
 - The 7-day average test positivity rate is 1.4%, which is down from 1.6% last week. The average rate continues to decline from 2.9% in January.
 - There are 27 Vermonters currently hospitalized with 5 in the ICU and 2 that are on ventilators.
 - More Vermont COVID-19 statistics are available on the [Department of Health website](#).
- **Update on outbreaks and situations**
 - The Department of Health continues to track outbreaks throughout the state, including two large outbreaks at higher education facilities, and one at a correctional facility. Outbreak prevention teams continue to work with these sites.
- **Testing/tracing updates**
 - The Department of Health is maintaining its COVID-19 testing capability. There are still times set aside for first responders at many testing sites.
- **Vaccination updates**
 - The state has vaccinated over 107,750 Vermonters so far including over 59,000 who have completed their full vaccinations. Full vaccination statistics can be viewed on the [Department of Health website](#).
 - The biggest vaccine news is that over the weekend, Johnson & Johnson received Emergency Use Authorization from the FDA for its single-shot COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Vermont vaccine eligibility expanded to those 65 years old and older this past Monday. Because of the addition of Johnson & Johnson vaccines, as well as increasing supply of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, Vermont is scaling up its vaccine distribution in the following ways:
 - This upcoming Monday, March 8th, vaccinations of adults with [certain high-risk health conditions](#) will begin.

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- Because this is a large population (there are some 75,000 Vermonters with these conditions) and because age is a factor in one's COVID risk, this eligibility expansion will be split into two sections: Vermonters 55 years old and older with certain high-risk conditions can register starting Monday, March 8th, while those aged 16-54 with the same conditions can register starting Monday, March 15th.
 - Starting next week, teachers, school staff, childcare providers, and early education providers will be eligible for vaccination, both through on-site vaccination clinics administering the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and through appointments at Walgreens for the two-dose vaccines. This group is being prioritized because there are serious public health impacts associated with remote and hybrid instruction.
 - Also starting next week, Vermont will expand vaccine eligibility for the public safety sector. This expansion will include police staff such as sergeants, lieutenants, and others; support staff; 911 calltakers; and Corrections employees. This expansion does not cover fire department auxiliary members.
 - Agency chiefs will receive a special code to provide to staff who have yet to be vaccinated. Chiefs must be responsible with the code and make sure it is only shared with eligible individuals.
 - Vaccination of homebound Vermonters continues as well. Starting tomorrow, homebound Vermonters who have not yet been contacted about at-home vaccination can call the vaccine call center to arrange for vaccination at 802-863-7240 (toll-free 833-722-0860).
 - There may be about a 2-week waiting period for scheduling an at-home vaccination.
 - It is important that this program is used only by those who truly cannot make it a vaccination clinic.
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III. SEOC Overview/VEM Comments: VEM Director Erica Bornemann

- **SEOC status:** The SEOC remains activated every weekday from 0800 until 1600. On 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 changes:**
 - The Agency of Commerce and Community Development recently released [new guidance](#) allowing those who live within 5 miles of Vermont's border to cross state lines without quarantining, if the following conditions are met:
 - The distance traveled is less than 5 miles.
 - The person returns the same day.
 - The travel is for an essential purpose (including worship, going to a gym, getting a haircut, and participating in place-based outdoor recreation, but not including social gatherings, dining at a restaurant or bar, or going to an indoor entertainment venue).
 - On Monday, the Agency of Administration [announced](#) that state employees able to telework should expect to do so through at least the end of May. However, beginning April 1st state employees can request to return to their office under certain conditions.
 - In a [bill signed into law](#) on Tuesday, Governor Scott and the state legislature [adjusted Vermont's fiscal year 2021 budget](#) to address the coronavirus response (among other, unrelated changes).

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- For example, the act allocates portions of the Coronavirus Relief Fund to Vermont State Colleges and landlords waiting for back rent.
 - The SEOC continues to support Vermont's vaccination campaign, especially as the state's vaccine allocation increases. The SEOC is helping the Department of Health locate vaccination sites and coordinate other logistics. There continues to be significant support for the upcoming educator vaccine phase.
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IV. Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns: Public Policy and Advocacy Director Karen Horn

- Thank you local officials for running a smooth and socially distanced town meeting day.
 - State legislative updates:
 - Budget adjustment [H. 138](#) was signed by the Governor on March 2nd. The legislature is holding back on spending or reallocating Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) dollars pending guidance about how they may use it through the end of 2021. The bill allocates CRF where federal guidance is clear. It uses CRF dollars to match FEMA funds for emergency food, hotel leases for the homeless, security, and general COVID-19 response. It continues to fund Everyone Eats through June 2021. In addition, it authorizes the Secretary of Administration to allocate up to \$3 million from the CRF for emergency response to issues affecting the public health, safety, or welfare.
 - Another COVID-19 relief bill, [H.315](#), is currently in Vermont's Senate Appropriations Committee. It includes:
 - \$10 million for gap economic recovery grants to small businesses
 - \$10 million to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to enable compliance with COVID-19 public health precautions.
 - \$300,000 to the Department of Mental Health for emergency outreach mental health services.
 - \$150,000 for training and wellness supports for frontline health care workers to help them meet Vermonter's current mental health needs.
 - \$1.3 million to the Vermont Foodbank to pay for the Vermont Farmers-to-Families Food Box Program in January and February.
 - \$2.2 million to further support broadband lines extensions and community resiliency.
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V. Questions from Call Participants

- The Fire Academy continues to work on reopening guidance for training and hopes to provide more information in the near future.
- Summer camp staff have not been mentioned within the educator vaccine phase as of yet.
- Roster updates from first response agencies are no longer needed as the forecasting needed through the first round of phase 1A is no longer needed.
- For additional information about the education-related vaccine phase please visit: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/vaccine/about-covid-19-vaccines-vermont>