

Town of Middlebury
Emergency Management Bulletin
November 6, 2020

There's Trouble (COVID Trouble, that is) Right Here in River City

Alright, a tacky take off on "The Music Man". COVID is taking off and it's coming here.

- 519 new COVID cases in Vermont in the past 30 days, that's almost a quarter of the aggregate infections since March.
- 35 new cases since yesterday.
- The case count for the Central Vermont outbreak is now up to 115, this led to 65 cases at St. Mikes.

Troubling- you bet! Especially when contact tracing revealed it wasn't hockey that did this, it was a failed practice in protective actions- no masking, no social distancing, no quarantine coming in from out-of-state. It was all community-wide transmission brought on by mobility and travel and unrestricted social activities. Someone isn't paying attention.

Addison County jumped up a notch ahead of Windham County and now has 129 total cases. Okay, 34,000 people in Addison County, 129 got infected. Fair enough, small numbers. But as we see in central Vermont, small numbers can grow and grow, and grow quickly. In a COVID fatigue environment the relatively low number makes you feel 6 feet tall and bullet proof and therefore pretty immune. You're not. You don't stand in an open cornfield with an aluminum foil hat on during a lightning storm thinking chances are pretty low you'll get struck. It's that odd chance you will that keeps you under cover. But you can see a storm, can't see COVID. It's out there as sure as thunder and lightning, but every minute of every day. Think about it.

This Week's Numbers in New England and Elsewhere

Case growth in the past 7 days (or why there is so much red in the cross state travel map)

CT – 6,246 (1.1 new cases per square mile) MA – 8,439; ME- 793; NH- 922; NY -15,221; RI- 3,178 (3 new cases per square mile)

The United States recorded 1,097 more COVID-19-related deaths on Wednesday.

A surge in confirmed coronavirus cases in Kansas is hitting some of the state's most rural counties hard. Health officials in Kansas say the virus is spreading because people are still going to family gatherings such as weddings, baby showers, and barbecues

A health official in Johnson County says 20 percent of its cases since Sept. 1 are people infecting others in their own households.

Maine, health officials on Tuesday reported 139 new coronavirus cases across the state. Tuesday's report brings the total number of coronavirus cases in Maine to 6,926. Of those, 6,136 have been confirmed positive, while 788 were classified as "probable cases".

Wyoming hospitalizations due to COVID-19 are at an all-time high.

Holiday Travel Messaging Toolkit for Schools

With the holidays approaching, schools may be planning to communicate with their communities about the risk of travel. The Health Department has developed a Holiday Travel Toolkit for Schools for use in helping to encourage families to consider their plans carefully to protect one another.

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID19-Schools-Holiday-Travel-Toolkit.pdf>

The toolkit includes: travel questions families can ask themselves, information on how to acknowledge the challenges of the difficult decisions about whether and how to travel, considering alternatives to travel or hosting guests, and ideas for social media and newsletters.

This new toolkit can help everyone to make informed choices based on the risk of getting or spreading the virus, especially when you learn of a positive case within your school.

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/your-community/prek-12-schools>

VDH response to Case Increase

VDH is developing plans for increased testing, up to 7 days a week, as well as surveillance testing of first responders. With the UVM lab taken out due to the cyber attack, it has delayed implementation of these plans.

Vaccine Plans

No, there is no vaccine, but VDH has plans in ready and in place. Plans were required to be in place by November 15, but it is not likely any vaccine will be ready by then. The plan is to inoculate health care workers, first responders, and those at highest risk prior to making the vaccine generally available.

New Guidance

Governor Scott announced today new guidance for private get-togethers. These are not rules yet, and the Gov really hopes people will follow them to stem the tide of COVID growth:

When planning guests or a gathering, ask them the critical questions first – Do you have a fever, a cough, flu-like symptoms, shortness of breath, loss of taste, have you been outside of Vermont recently, have you traveled by bus, plane, train among strangers, any contact in the prior two weeks with someone suspected of or actually suffering from COVID. If you get any response other than a firm “NO” on any question, that person should not gather with you.

Hoo-boy, We Don't Want this Here

This news story Thursday night out of Connecticut, where COVID fatigue is driving up cases exponentially:

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (WTNH) — The New Haven Health Department continues its citywide crackdown on businesses that are breaking COVID safety regulations.

Last week, investigators raided Anthony's Ocean View restaurant and banquet hall following a packed Halloween party. Now, Health Director Maritza Bond said her investigators are looking into reports that employees of the business have begun testing positive for COVID-19. The business told News 8 it has no comment at this time.

Bond gave the update during a press conference addressing safety concerns at Walmart on Foxon Boulevard. Health inspectors issued a final notice to the retail giant Thursday following, they say, months of complaints about mask-wearing and social distancing. Bond said one employee has tested positive for COVID, but that contact tracing has been difficult because the workers there are not complying with her department's efforts.

Customers News 8 spoke with said they've noticed some social distancing issues themselves. "You see some people together, like three, four people together," said Jose Colon. "They have their mask [pulled] down," said customer Isaiah Colon, speaking about both patrons and workers.

Bond said her inspectors noted large crowds at Walmart last weekend, and that they've been getting complaints of capacity limit violations as well as. "Inconsistencies with disinfecting protocols, return to work protocols, failure to follow state testing and contact tracing protocols."

But the busy store, which is considered an essential business, serves a neighborhood of elderly and low-income residents, with a lack of access to other grocery or retail businesses. "They're a grocery store; they're everything," said customer Mary Starno. "They're a pharmacy, so they're totally essential."

Bond said she understands, but, "Essential businesses are essential but it is also essential they follow health and safety protocols to ensure the safety of the patrons as well as the employees." She's hoping Walmart will turn things around instead of forcing inspectors to close it down. The store has three days to submit a corrective action plan to the city.