

VERMONT STATE POLICE

Office of the Director

Memo



To: Commissioner Michael E. Schirling
From: Colonel Matthew T. Birmingham
Date: April 14, 2020
Re: COVID-19 Operational Overview – Vermont State Police

The Vermont State Police remains at COVID-19 Response Protocol LEVEL 2:

Level 2: Measured Response (Modified Operations)

- Continue to implement immediate response for life safety events. Examples include, but are not limited to domestic assault, robbery, injury crash response, missing persons, burglaries in progress, etc. Supervisors will monitor calls for service and authorize remote response if appropriate. Examples include, but are not limited to reports of vandalism, thefts, and minor crashes.
- New or pending cases requiring investigation by the Criminal Division will be screened for priority by unit supervisors. No new proactive criminal investigations will commence without prior unit commander approval.
- Proactive motor vehicle enforcement is limited to instances of more serious violations observed by members.
- Members shall be prepared to operate in uniform or plain clothes assignment as necessary and be called upon to work in a statewide capacity. Commanders will evaluate and instruct members on specific assignments. Members will be encouraged to work remotely if possible.
- All precautions associated with level 1 will be in effect with consideration for enhanced precautions as needed based on guidance by the VDH and the CDC. These include efforts to distance contact with the public, when possible, to six feet.
- Members shall be prepared to assist other state and local responders and assets including but not limited to assisting the VDH with travel history and/or investigative work related to individual health backgrounds.
- All staff will evaluate all training and travel and consider cancelling or rescheduling.
- Members shall self-monitor for sickness and report if symptomatic.
- Walk-in complaints will be encouraged to report via telephone or other technology.

Despite operating under these modified response protocols, the Vermont State Police remains fully operational, including every special team and investigative unit. All training statewide and out of state travel have been cancelled indefinitely. We are monitoring sick leave use daily to ensure staffing levels remain strong. The following are specific highlights by division:

Field Force Division:

- Every trooper has been issued PPE to include N95 masks, eye protection, gloves and hand sanitizer.
- Every field station has developed and implemented high visibility patrols.

- Every field station is closed to the public, however call-in protocols have been established for walk-in complaints.
- Troopers have been ordered to stay out of the barracks unless it is necessary to be there. Cell phones are being issued to every member so they can make calls from their cruisers.
- Troopers are responding to Executive Order violation complaints with the posture of voluntary compliance and education.

Criminal Division:

- All Criminal Division members have been asked to work from home, unless they are responding to a call for service.
- Six troopers assigned to the Narcotics Investigation Unit have been temporarily re-assigned to the Field Force Division.
- Twenty troopers have been assigned to the Vermont Department of Health to assist with communications, interviews and contact tracing.
- Two troopers have been assigned to assist the PSAPs with Executive Order online portal complaints.

Support Services Division:

- Both PSAPs have restricted access to on-duty PSAP personnel only. Enhanced cleaning measures have been established by BGS.
- The Office of Professional Development has been assigned to assist the Vermont Police Academy with completing the 109th Basic Training Class.
- Two troopers have been assigned to coordinate distribution of SNS PPE across the state.

In addition to responding to calls for service and managing the COVID-19 response, many members of the state police have gone above and beyond the call of duty during this crisis. Below are some examples:

- A trooper in Rutland on his own time and with his own money made face shields for healthcare workers using a 3D printer. Another trooper in northern Vermont has also started using his 3D printer to make face shields.
- Troopers have been delivering Strategic National Stockpile PPE to medical professionals and law enforcement throughout the state.
- We have started a series of interactive, online, ongoing opportunities for the public to connect with VSP, including:
 - Facebook Live story time for kids with a trooper.
 - Facebook Live demonstration of the Crime Scene Search Team.
 - Social media math problem for students and demo of the Crash Reconstruction Team.
- Civilian and sworn members collaborated with local companies such as Autumn Harp and Cold Hollow Cider to produce hand sanitizer for use in the field.
- Troopers across the state are participating in weekly parades at area hospitals to thank health care workers. There will be a parade at UVMHC this week.
- Troopers across the state have participated in drive by birthday parades for children who are at home.
- Troopers in Shaftsbury have been helping Arlington High School students deliver meals to homeless people in Bennington County. They have also assisted with Meals on Wheels as needed.
- Troopers in Rutland have also assisted with delivery of meals to those in need.

- Troopers in St Johnsbury assisted with a drive by wake in Danville for a man who died from cancer.
- Troopers recently relayed priority COVID-19 tests for DOC from St. Albans to Massachusetts for analysis.
- Troopers in Derby are delivering mail to elderly residents who cannot leave their homes.
- We have set up barracks statewide as collection points for the public to donate PPE.
- Our victim services director has been involved with the following:
 - Spoke with both VPR and WCAX regarding domestic violence cases during the pandemic.
 - Working with UVMHC and other hospitals around Vermont to provide support to families who have lost loved ones to COVID-19.
- Twenty troopers around the state have been assigned to the Vermont Department of Health to assist with communications, interviews and contact tracing.
- Troopers are assisting the PSAP by screening tips coming into the online EO compliance portal.
- Monthly radio show – Troopers are speaking to the public on 96.3 News Talk, WVMT Marcus and Kurt & 92.9 Mike and Mary. Topics discussed – FIP, Cold Case Unit, Bomb Squad, K9 unit, Traffic Safety & MCU.
- Domestic violence awareness and response messaging campaign during the pandemic has been considered a national model and used by IACP to their list serve. – Per Thomas Tremblay
- A PSAP supervisor’s mother passed away as the crisis began to take effect. He took two days of bereavement, canceled the remainder of his time off and returned to work.