

## Effect of Covid19 on EMS Absenteeism

April 22, 2020

### Background

This report summarizes responses to the Vermont EMS survey of ambulance services regarding the effects of the Coronavirus on their operations up to April 22, 2020, focusing on absenteeism. Responses up to April 16 have been grouped by week ending on Thursday. **Since the day of the week when this report is issued changed from a Friday to Wednesday, the newest data is for slightly less than a week. It has been highlighted in the table with yellow.**

Ambulance services were asked to select one of several options defined as:

Slight effect

Moderate effect

Serious effect

Catastrophic effect

These definitions are somewhat subjective, but capture the effects of the pandemic as viewed by the agencies. Heads of service were also given the opportunity to describe further in their own words how the virus has affected their agencies. Many of these comments are quoted or paraphrased below to give a more comprehensive perspective on how the pandemic has affected EMS in Vermont.

### Table of Responses

Overall, few agencies have reported serious effects and none have experienced what they characterize as catastrophic effects. Most were moderate in severity, with a number of services reporting several employees unable to work while waiting for Coronavirus testing results.

Week	Slight Effect	Moderate Effect	Serious Effect	Catastrophic Effect	Comments
Mar 13-19		1			One agency experienced three simultaneous events effecting their staffing levels: "Norwich University closing for the term and 20 rostered NU students not returning, 15 more members either deemed essential and prohibited from outside volunteerism or had a household member deemed essential and took leave to avoid bringing an exposure home."

Mar 20-26		8			One service had five days where an unspecified number of employees were out with flu. Another agency's administrative offices are located in the town office and they have not been allowed access. This recurs as a moderate effect through the end of this report.
Mar 27 – Apr 2	1	4			All of the effects this week were the result of the administrative lack of access described above except for one provider who was exposed to coronavirus from PPE failure (not specified further). A portion of the shift was left open until alternative coverage was arranged.
Apr 3-9		7			One service had three days where two employees were out awaiting results of Coronavirus testing.
Apr 10-16	11	3	2		<p>One serious effect was in a service that was unable to do transfers on a day when they ordinarily do a significant number of them. A specific reason was not given for why the employees were not available.</p> <p>The other serious effect occurred because four volunteers were not allowed by their non-EMS primary employers to run EMS duty because of fear of potential exposure to Covid-19 at EMS.</p> <p>Another agency had a slight effect waiting four to five days for results on three employees, even though they received priority as HCPs/essential workers.</p> <p>"We have lost 3 people, at this point we have been able to cover the reduced volume."</p> <p>At another service, "1 employee pulled for Covid testing."</p> <p>A different agency had a close contact of one member present with symptoms one morning. "She is being tested today. We sent the employee home, and will bring him</p>

					back after three days if he has no symptoms.”
April 17-22	6				One service lost more than one member to National Guard activation. They also “have one out on medical leave as that member has asthma [and his] personal MD advised against him working.” Another has a full-time paramedic out for unspecified reasons. Several organizations reported occasional absenteeism (“normal stuff”), but overall “We have been in good shape.”

Future Reports

As the pandemic continues, Vermont EMS will continue to canvas EMS agencies regarding the effects of Covid-19 on delivery of EMS. We will evaluate the data not only for trends, but also for ways in which the Department of Health can assist providers during this challenging time. Future reports will likely present data in graphical fashion that allows for better understanding of how to accomplish those goals.