

Eclipse Planning Check-In

03/07/24

Much of northern Vermont is within the path of totality for the April 8 solar eclipse, making this an ideal place to witness the rare natural event. State agencies are planning for thousands of people to visit Vermont to view it (see [2024 Total Solar Eclipse in Vermont](#)), and towns and cities of all sizes as well as tourism-focused organizations are planning [local events](#).

VLCT is hosting webinars every two weeks from January 25 to April 4 to keep municipalities informed about State plans and to learn about community-level plans, so municipalities can anticipate how all these plans might intersect (or conflict!).

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State Planning Update

Eric Forand, VEM Director, reminded municipalities that traffic impacts will be the greatest disrupter. The State will be keeping rest areas and welcome centers open longer, and it is working to coordinate efforts with municipalities. VTrans is working with UVM to develop traffic models. Forand requested that municipalities share their events on the [Vacation Vermont calendar](#). He also requested that eclipse events be reported using the [State's survey form](#). This will help with modeling.

Forand reminded people to work with healthcare facilities, EMS, fire departments, etc. if roads will be closed because these services will be affected by the closure. He requested that municipalities use WAZE to post the closures too as this will help redirect traffic. The State is recommending use of Waze as far in advance as possible if the municipality wants to engage in traffic modeling. The State will send out its [survey](#) to gather information. Tell them what you know. Traffic modeling is intended to project where traffic will be, not to move it off the highway. The State is not planning to close roads or make them a single way traffic flow. Roving teams of VTrans/VSP staff will help address difficulties like broken down vehicles.

The State has reached out to gas stations encouraging them to have deliveries made in advance and to towing companies recommending they have people working. VEM held briefings with cell providers. An overwhelmed cell system is not anticipated based on modeling.

Traffic will be heavy that day, particularly in areas where weather and geography offer the best view of the eclipse. Municipalities should plan for traffic, parking (both legal and illegal), and possible stress on emergency services. The impact on public lands during mud season, wildfire risks, and more are other planning considerations.

Katharine Ingram, Department of Tourism & Marketing (VDTM) Trade and Partner Relations Manager, said municipalities should have received their eclipse glasses. The State does not have more. ECHO in Burlington purchased many. Contact Kelsi at kvonderlinn@echovermont.org about bulk purchases. Glasses also can be purchased through [Echo's website](#). Online, the glasses are \$3 each. They are Echo-branded.

The [Green Mountain Club's webpage](#) can be helpful for messaging to residents and visitors.

Priority Telecommunications Services (PTS)

Melissa Nazzaro, Emergency Communications Coordinator for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, provided a high level overview of Priority Telecommunications Services (PTS). Her slides will be posted on [VLCT's Eclipse Check-in Recordings and Resources webpage](#).

Priority Telecommunications Services (PTS) are a suite of services that enable priority telecommunications when networks are degraded or congested. Municipalities are priority service users.

There are three services:

- **Government Emergency Telecommunications Services (GETS)** is for landline and satellite phones. Subscribers receive a unique pin to access the service. Provides priority access and processing for landline phones. It doesn't matter whether the call initiator is using a cell or landline to make the GETS call.
- **Wireless Priority Service (WPS)** is for cell phones. It provides priority service when the wireless network is congested. WPS is an add on service to your regular cell phone subscription. It only provides priority within the US and its territories. A PTS Dialer app enables storage of your GETS PIN and pulls it from your phone contact list to automatically add in the required GETS or WPS prefix. WPS works for Iphone or Google, and automatically puts you as a priority call.
- **Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP)** is for the voice and data circuits. TSP is not applicable for this event.

FirstNet is public safety prioritization that requires the user and caller to use the same carrier. For GETS and WPS, the caller and person called can be with any carrier.

GETS and WPS used to have a cost, but now are free. TSP has a cost. If you have been using GETS or WPS with a charge, contact your carrier to have the charge removed from your subscription. Both are compatible with existing devices. GETS needs a PIN. Slides 7-14 of the presentation provide directions for how to use GETS. The back side of your GETS card has numbers to use for specific carriers. If using a landline, dial *272+area code+number+SEND. You must turn off WiFi due to a compatibility issue.

The App will put GETS in your contacts. Call that number to access. Must put pin in app once app is downloaded. Remember to test your device.

Burce Belt is the VT PTS Area Representative. His contact information is 202-993-6293 or bruce.belt@associates.cisa.dhs.gov. Bruce can answer questions and assist with training needs. If your municipality has enrolled previously, but you need a card, contact the DHS service center at 866-627-2255 or gets-wps@dhs.cisa.gov. There is a single point of contact for every organization. You can ask for these periodically and update them as needed.

Municipalities can sign up a group under the municipality's name by using a bulk spreadsheet upload. Contact Lynn Shea for more information about a bulk spreadsheet:

Lynn Shea
PTS Service Center
Emergency Communications Division
Service Center: support@gwids.cisa.gov
Direct: 202-240-9720
Email: lynn.shea@associates.cisa.dhs.gov

These programs are specifically for phone calls, not for any other application or data sharing within your cell phone. There is no priority for your apps, data sharing, or text. However, texting requires less bandwidth than calling.

Resources

New or Modified

- The state has also established a dedicated text notification system for the event to convey weather, traffic, and other information; text VTECLIPSE to 888777 to register.
- The State has a [survey form](#) municipalities can use to report events *for incorporation into traffic modeling*. Continue to use the [Vermont Vacation calendar](#) to have events published.
- PTS Dialer App instructions: Visit cisa.gov/pts for information about downloading and utilizing.
- Burce Belt, Vermont PTS Area Representative, contact information: 202-993-6293 or bruce.belt@associates.cisa.dhs.gov.
- Contact Lynn Shea at 202-240-9720 or lynn.shea@associates.cisa.dhs.gov regarding uploads of bulk spreadsheet (multiple municipal contacts) for GETS and WPS.

Previously Included

- Visit [VLCT's Eclipse Planning Check-in Recordings and Resources webpage](#) for check in slides and notes, updates, and new information.
- Email Katie Buckley (kbuckley@vlct.org) or Bonnie Waninger (bwaninger@vlct.org) from VLCT's Federal Funding Assistance Program if you have questions after the call.
- [State of Vermont April 8 Solar Eclipse webpage](#). This new link allows municipalities to list their events. To make a listing, create an account using "Manage Your Events" at the bottom of the webpage. Find events in neighboring communities to coordinate planning for impacts. Even if you aren't having an event, another community's event might impact your community.
- *Vermont State Parks*: A list of parks that will be opened can be found in the [Vermont State Parks blogspot](#). Park facilities will be closed for this event. Portable toilets and/or pit/composting toilets will be available. Parking will be available at each of these locations. Parking may be limited depending on the number of visitors. Check back for updates as some viewing locations may change due to on the ground conditions as the date nears.
- *The Vermont Department of Libraries* [Eclipse 2024 Information webpage](#).
- *Vermont Public's* [2024 Eclipse in Vermont webpage](#) includes events that are not included on the State Eclipse webpage. Municipalities can use this webpage to check for additional events in neighboring communities to help coordinate planning and response activities.
- [Waze crowd-sourced navigation app](#) is a free, Google-owned GPS app that provides travelers with up-to-date navigation and traffic information. Municipalities can set up an account and use Waze to list local road closures and day-of-event warnings. The [Waze Communities Knowledge Hub page](#) includes How-To Guides and other resources.

- Vermont Tourism and Marketing Program [Basic Listing Request Form](#). This form allows people to list their tourism-related services, including one-time lodging for the Solar Eclipse. One complimentary listing is permitted per business or organization.
- [“How Can You Tell If Your Eclipse Glasses or Handheld Solar Viewers Are Safe?”](#) American Astronomical Society, 2024.
- Howells, Kate. [“Are Your Solar Eclipse Glasses Safe?”](#) *The Planetary Society*, 7 September 2023..
- American Astronomical Society (AAS) list of approved reputable vendors: <https://eclipse.aas.org/eye-safety/viewers-filters>.

Q&A Report

Q1. Where can I find the PTS Dialer App instructions?

A1. The presentation slides have instructions. You also can visit cisa.gov/pts for information about downloading and utilizing the app.

Q2. Does VEM recommend municipalities work with law enforcement?

A2. VSP is all-hands-on-deck, but it has limited assets. Municipalities should make sure local law enforcement is aware of any events. Law enforcement might have priorities based on route travelled or participation levels. Contact fire, EMS, etc. so they know too. Reach out to them so they understand event size, etc. and what might be needed.

Q3. When the traffic modeling is complete, will the State reach out to municipalities if there are concerns for local roads?

A3. UVM is working on the traffic model. VEM will request it share the modeling results. The models are still in development. Information might be presented at a Check in or otherwise shared so high-volume traffic municipalities will be aware.

Most people will be routing themselves through their phones, which makes routing variable and affects modeling once traffic backup happens. Traffic backups *will* happen. When I-89 and I-91 back up, *and they will*, alternate roads will get traffic overflow. Municipalities should plan for this. The State is working to smooth traffic flow when they can, but they cannot stop traffic backup and lanes on state highways will not be closed. Keep shoulders open for emergency vehicles.

The State recommends municipalities use Waze as far in advance as possible if they want to engage in modeling. Also, the State will send out a [survey](#) to gather information. Please note that modeling is intended to project where traffic will be, not to move it off the highway.