



# LEPC Local Emergency Planning Committee

Gem County LEPC  
November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
**Meeting Minutes**

**In Attendance:**

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Laurie Boston, Gem Co. EM            | Jay Breidenbach, NOAA                        |
| Bill Butticci, Gem Co. Commissioner  | Curt Christensen, Emmett Fire Dept.          |
| Elbia Christensen, EOC Logistics     | Shauna Davis, Emmett School Dist.            |
| Robert Feeley, IOEM                  | Liz Gochnour, LEPC Secretary                 |
| Tahja Jensen, Prosecutor’s Office    | Don Jones, Gem County EMS                    |
| Steve Kunka, Emmett Police           | Troy Lindquist, NOAA                         |
| Bev Martin, Sheriff’s Posse          | Len McCaulou, Gem County EMS                 |
| Fire Dist. #2                        | Kami McGann, Valor Health                    |
| Lorrie Pahl, IOEM                    | Gordon Petrie, Emmett City Mayor             |
| Mark Rekow, Gem Co. Commissioner     | Clint Seamons, Emmett Public Works           |
| Denise Sorensen, Emmett City Council | Brad Turpin, Valor Health                    |
| Barbara Weber, American Red Cross    | Tina Wilson, Western Alliance/City of Emmett |
| Terry Wilson, Southwest Dist. Health | Donnie Wunder, Gem Co. Sheriff               |

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

The Gem County Local Emergency Planning Committee is an organized gathering of community members, response agencies, organizations, and public officials, sanctioned by Congress to work together prior to any emergency, natural or man-made disaster, or hazardous material incident, in an attempt to improve planning, response, and coordination as well as the mutual understanding of capabilities and resources to the situation.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of the Gem County Local Emergency Planning Committee is to enhance capabilities in order to successfully mitigate, respond to, and recover from emergency situations in Gem Co community.

**Meeting called to order by Curt Christensen at 8:30a.m.**

**Approval of October minutes:**

- Minutes for October 20 have been delayed because of COVID-19 complications. They will be available in January 2021.

**Winter Weather Preview – Jay Breidenbach, National Weather Service:**

- January – September have had a record number of climate disasters across the United States. The most relevant have been the drought conditions and extreme wild fires. Idaho has had it’s share of the wild fires this year, but California and Oregon were devastated with huge fires.
- The Greek alphabet is now being used to name hurricanes because all of the letters from the normal alphabet have been used. Hurricane Delta hit Louisiana in October. Hurricane Eta and Iota his Central America less than two weeks apart from each other.
- During the most of the month of September, there was a thick plume of smoke that was over the area that caused health problems.
- The Badger fire that was mainly in Washington and Adams county burned 96,614 acres. The NOAA will be monitoring this area due to the condition of the soil left from the fire. The ground can become susceptible to flash flooding during the rainy season.
- A LaNina winter pattern is expected for this year based on activity near the equator in the Tropical Pacific Ocean. When this patterns happens, typically this means that the cold air that is usually

trapped in Northern Canada can make incursions into Idaho. The extreme winter of 2017 was also a LaNina pattern. This winter is not expected to be as extreme, with a normal snow expected and higher levels of precipitation.

- SNOTEL sites are trending above normal. Bogus Basin currently has the most snow for this time of year since 1990.
- If you are interested in measuring precipitation and snow, visit the website: [www.cocorahs.org](http://www.cocorahs.org).

### **COVID-19 Update:**

- **Valor Health: Brad Turpin:** Valor Health is experiencing significant demand with the Urgent Care being very busy. Staff are out with COVID or taking care of loved ones that have COVID. The Urgent Care is now closed on Sundays, so the Emergency Department has seen an increase in patients. The first Sunday that the Urgent Care was closed, the Emergency Department saw twice as many patients. Some primary care appointments have had to be rescheduled to shift provider coverage to the Urgent Care. Saint Alphonsus and St. Luke's have asked if Valor Health has any staff that could help them in a crisis situation to back up their staff. They are also looking at the possibility of reverse transfers. COVID + patients would be transferred out of Valor Health and general medical/extended stay patients would be transferred to Valor Health. No surgeries have been differed yet, but Valor Health has been asked to call ahead for availability at Saint Al's and St. Luke's if the need to transfer may become necessary from the OR.  
**Kami McGann:** Valor Health is reporting a 31%, 7-day rolling positivity rate. The majority of the testing is from Gem County residents. Currently the main option for PCR testing (nasal pharyngeal) at Valor Health is being sent out to LabCorp. Turnaround time have been around 2-4 days. In-house testing is expected to start being done Today with the Binex Now, supplied by Southwest District Health. They have completed their training. Testing using the Binex antigen test will only be done on symptomatic patients. 1000 tests have been received with more to be supplied as needed. Turnaround time is same day with a 15-minute result. There are a few logistics that need to be finalized for provider order, critical results and the guidelines with CLIA to start testing Today. This test has been as accurate as other point of care tests with a 10% error rate. Valor Health has performed approximately 69% of the confirmed cases for Gem County. The Urgent Care is seeing close to 45 respiratory visits and performing 30-50 tests per day.
- **Terry Wilson, SWDH:** SWDH has put in approximately 36,000 hours since March for their COVID response. A tier system has been put in place for vaccine distribution. There are two vaccines that will be available in early December. They will be working with schools and other businesses to help take care of their needs. Flu pods are continuing around the community to get vaccinations done. There was a large spike in COVID cases over the weekend with Canyon County having over 795 cases in the last 4 days.
- **Rob Feeley, IOEM:** IOEM has been working on PPE distribution and FEMA cost recovery. The needs have been going up and down based on the number of COVID cases. Stocks are good so contact IOEM or Laurie for additional PPE needs. There have been inquiries from Healthcare facilities about what capabilities the Idaho National Guard can assist them with. They can assist with traffic control at the testing facilities, contact tracing, etc.
- **Len McCaulou, Gem County EMS:** There have been an increase in calls for flu-like symptoms and an increase in transfers. Valor Health is allowing Gem County to use their cleaning system for the ambulance. There has been an increase in calls from last month with 112 calls so far for November.

They have 3.5 full-time paramedics. There are part-time paramedics, but they are also putting in overtime at their full time jobs. 3-4 staff are currently out with COVID.

- **Laurie Boston, Gem County Emergency Management:** There have been 64 cases since Friday and a total of 630 cases to date in Gem County. We are currently in the Orange health alert level and will likely move into Red due to the number of cases and the positivity rate. Valor Health reported a 24.45% 30-day positivity rate. SWDH reported over 700 cases Yesterday. They are running behind in contact tracing. SWDH is asking for people to have safe Holiday practices: avoid travel and keep gatherings to immediate household members. Cases that have been identified have come from social settings where precautions were not taken. Emmett School Board approved a mask mandate to be in effect starting November 30<sup>th</sup>. The City Library has limited the number of people coming into the building and have adjusted their hours. They are open Mon, Tues, Thurs, and Fri. Closed on Wed for cleaning. It is being reported the EOC that people testing positive have not been informing those that they have had contact with about their positivity.

**Public Comments:** No public comments at this time.

### **General Reports:**

- **Bill Buttici, Gem County Commissioners:** The Court House is open on a limited basis with a mask mandate to enter the building. The DMV is back open on a limited basis. There have been COVID + cases within the staff. They have been working from home and rotating staff in the office.
- **Mark Rekow, Gem County Commissioners:** The Commissioners conference/meeting room is being upgraded to have virtual meetings. They are continuing to see land use matters with building permits and split use. There has been snow in the Ola area that the road department has been working on. The Commissioners will be participating in the Thanksgiving food distribution that will be next week at the Senior Center.
- **Tahja Jensen, Prosecutor's Office:** All jury trials have been suspended until the first week of January. Courts are getting bogged down with the almost 9-month delay in jury trials. Staff have been working remotely as much as possible due to the impact of COVID + cases within staff.
- **Donnie Wunder, Gem County Sherriff:** Driver's licenses are by appointment only. The Jail is screening all personnel entering the building. As many patrol calls are being handled over the phone as possible. All employees are working at this point.
- **Mayor Petrie, City of Emmett:** The city has been getting ready for heavy snow. City procedures have been working to limit COVID exposure. Construction on John's is almost complete.
- **Clint Seamons, Emmett Public Works:** Construction on John's should be completed in the next 30 days. The Highway 16 project is set to start in the spring.
- **Steve Kunka, City Police:** There will be an Incident Command presentation in the December LEPC meeting based on the incident that happened last week.
- **Curt Christensen, City Fire:** The Emmett Fire Department is 100% staffed at this time. They have been working with Barbara Hueginin and several City staff to organize Santa's Run Through Emmett. No in-person training will be held; virtual trainings will be held. There will be a Public Hearing regarding a change to the International Fire Code and fires for food trucks.  
Senior Center: In house dining will be closed for their Thanksgiving meal on Wednesday. Curb side and limited delivery will be available.
- **Shauna Davis, Emmett School District:** The school district is trying to keep the buses sanitized as much as possible.
- **Bev Martin, Ola Community/Fire District 2:** October 29<sup>th</sup>, there was a fire reported up Third Fork, 23 miles above Ola. They could not locate it at the time it was reported, but the next day it blew up. IDL dropped water on it for 3 days to help extinguish it. Nov 13<sup>th</sup>, 8 inches of snow accumulated with Nov 15<sup>th</sup>, 5 inches of snow. The County Road department worked over the weekend to plow out the

road. The Fire #2 board meeting was postponed until next week. They are holding virtual meetings and trainings and running calls with the minimum of staff on the trucks. Ola Community: The sewer system was complete at the community center before the snow came.

- **Barbara Weber, American Red Cross:** They responded to one call in Gem County. The home was a complete loss due to fire. They have smoke alarms available.

Meeting adjourned at 9:41am. Mayor Petrie moved to adjourn. Don Jones seconded the motion.

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am. Direction will be provided at a later date on whether the meeting will be in person or remote.