

Eclipse Planning Check-In

02/08/24

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, Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) Director, noted that state agencies host a higher level planning meeting every week with working groups related to specific issues.

New England 511 provides notifications about state-level roadwork, road restrictions, road closures, and special events. It does not provide information about local roads. The State has partnered with Waze for local road information. Waze (<https://www.waze.com/apps/>) is a free, Google-owned GPS app that provides travelers with up-to-date navigation and traffic information. Municipalities can sign up and use Waze to alert residents and visitors to local road closures and day-of events. Because Waze transfers information about state roads from 511, it will provide travelers with the best picture about travel routes. Citizens can input and validate information in Waze, which provides a better real-time picture. VEM recommends signing up for a Waze account now. Towns requested the State provide instructions for accessing Waze and for inputting information.

There are two subgroups of visitors: those who pre-planned their trip and those who make same-day decisions to travel and have not planned. The State is more worried about those who did not plan.

Forand requested that municipalities enter their eclipse event into the Vermont Tourism Calendar. If you have an estimated number of participants, please share that. The State is using hotel and airline reservations to gauge the number of expected visitors.

The State may extend open hours for Welcome Centers and rest areas. It is expecting lots of traffic on I-89 and I-91. The State has an event-specific website (vermont.gov/eclipse; site not active yet) to concentrate State information. Municipalities can use this generic information.

The State is setting up VT Alert to allow visitors to receive statewide notices for the duration of the eclipse event. The group will be marketed to out-of-state visitors. It will only be used for emergency alerts. There also will be general social media pushes, such as don't use muddy trails, don't park in farmer's fields, etc.

There was a question during VLCT's January 25 check-in about open dates for Maidstone and Mt. One Bridge bridges. Both bridges, which are owned by the State of New Hampshire, will be open by the event. The affected towns were contacted with this information.

Forand requested towns alert the State if they are opening their local Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The State will be contacting municipal Emergency Management Directors (EMDs) throughout the day.

The State EOC will be open partially on Sunday, all day on Monday, and partially on Tuesday. The State is using the eclipse as an EOC training event and will be prepared if EOC services are required.

Katharine Ingram, Department of Tourism & Marketing (VDTM) Trade and Partner Relations Manager, noted her department's role is estimating the numbers of prospective visitors. If event sponsors have issues entering their event on the State's website, they can email Katharine at Katharine.ingram@Vermont.gov. She noted the State will be changing the site for events.

VDTM has closed its form for ordering eclipse glasses because they are oversubscribed. The State is working to determine an equitable distribution formula. It cannot guarantee everyone will receive glasses. If your town missed out on requesting glasses, you can email Katharine a request this week. The State is working to distribute the glasses to communities by Town Meeting Day.

Ingram noted that the State is encouraging communities and event organizers to **have adequate signage for where visitors should and should not go. The signs should be easy to read and simple.**

Resources

- Visit <https://www.vlct.org/resource/eclipse-planning-check-recordings-and-resources> for VLCT's 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.
- Waze crowd-sourced navigation app: <https://www.waze.com/apps/>. The [Waze Communities Knowledge Hub page](#) includes How-To Guides and other resources.
- Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing Events page: <https://plan.vermontvacation.com/events>. List your event by creating an account using "Manage Your Events" at the bottom of the webpage. Find events in neighboring communities to coordinate planning for impacts.
- Vermont Tourism and Marketing Program Basic Listing Request Form: <https://form.jotform.com/223616006195149>. 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. <https://eclipse.aas.org/eye-safety/iso-certification>.
- Howells, Kate. "Are Your Solar Eclipse Glasses Safe?" *The Planetary Society*, 7 September 2023. https://www.planetary.org/articles/are-your-solar-eclipse-glasses-safe?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAJKuBhAdEiwAnZb7lZsJbeFq-G3BIQ5V7lQepLhkMPXAvryEB7TF1yP46owv-K_OXa8EpBoCNm8QAvD_BwE.
- American Astronomical Society (AAS) list of approved reputable vendors: <https://eclipse.aas.org/eye-safety/viewers-filters>.

- The Vermont Short-Term Rental Alliance is [hosting a webinar](#) on February 12 to help. This information can be shared with residents who are thinking about renting out their home to last-minute eclipse-peepers.
- The Vermont Department of Libraries will present an Eclipse Planning Round Table discussion on Thursday, February 29, 2024, from 2:00 to 3:00 pm. Library staff from across the state can share ideas and resources, including event planning and supporting community events in towns and cities. Learn more and register [here](#).
- Sample placeholder event listing: <https://www.shelburnevt.org/569/2024-Solar-Eclipse>. The Town of Shelburne is continuing to refine the details of its event.

Q&A Report

- Q1.** There is a section on vermontvacation.com titled “viewing from Vermont Cities”. How do we get a section titled “viewing from Vermont Towns and Villages” and then get the Town with events listed there?
- A1.** The “Viewing for Vermont Cities” link takes you to the Vermont Downtowns page even though it lists out a few cities. Katharine will take this feedback to their team.
- Q2.** Can you share the link that allows us to add events to the calendar?
- A2.** The Events calendar link is <https://plan.vermontvacation.com/events>. See events in neighboring communities. List your event by creating an account using “Manage Your Events” at the bottom of the webpage. Email Katharine Ingram at Katharine.Ingram@Vermont.gov if you have issues or questions.
- Q3.** When events are entered on the Vermont Vacation webpage, where should our estimated event participant numbers be entered?
- A3.** The anticipated number of event participants should be emailed to Katharine at Katharine.Ingram@vermont.gov. Having estimated participant numbers helps the State plan for impacts.
- Q4.** How can people with short-term rentals let visitors know about their lodging?
- A4.** The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing has a program that allows people to list their tourism-related services, including one-time lodging for the Solar Eclipse. One complimentary, basic listing is permitted per business or organization. To request a listing in the Vermont Vacation Directory, use this form: <https://form.jotform.com/223616006195149>. The form does not allow links to Airbnb and VRBO listings.
- Q5.** Would a Facebook page for the rental listing be acceptable?
- A5.** No. Any business (short term rental or otherwise) must have its own webpage and be open to the public in order to be on the directory.
- Q6.** What is the specification to help ensure eclipse eyewear is safe?
- A6.** The standard is ISO 12312-2 (sometimes written as ISO 12312-2:2015). This standard should be written on the glasses. A good company will have this standard on its website. See [Resources](#) section for articles about unscrupulous vendors.

- Q7.** How are municipalities communicating with residents about the event and the potential influx of visitors whether the community hosts an event?
- A7.** Some towns plan to communicate to residents at Town Meeting when they hand out glasses.
- Q8.** Can you review the information you shared at the last meeting on animal tracking and how pet owners can become a part of that study? This question related to an organization in the state that was going to look at how animals were be affected by the eclipse. Can pet owners become a part of that?
- A8.** This question was not answered. Eric will ask around.
- Q9.** Does the State have any fact sheets that towns and Regional Emergency Management Committees can hand out about Waze, etc.?
- A9.** The State will be posting basic information communities can use for their communications efforts to the vermont.gov/eclipse website when that site is open.
- Q10.** What are you advising for communities outside the zone of totality? Is there a network to share resources with more impacted communities?
- A10.** This call is the network. At this point, the State is not seeing inquiries about sharing resources north and south. There are some inquiries about staging or restaging EMS assets.
- Q11.** Waterbury is not planning an event. It is planning information sharing for things like the town safety plan, available parking, communication strategies, and promotion of other people's event. Another community is emailing its local store after each Check-in to provide them updates. Are there other things towns should be doing?
- A11.** It would be helpful to coordinate with neighboring towns because their events might impact your town or vice versa, especially related to transportation. Part of the State campaign is advising gas stations to fill up, having electronic boards on highway for messaging, having tow trucks ready, and educating visitors to have snacks and water in the car.
- The arrival time for visitors will be spread over 3 days. Departures after the event are expected to clog roads with traffic and create other difficulties.
- Given it will be mud season, advise your road crews to keep a list of towing companies with them.
- It might be helpful to publish the location of urgent care locations for visitors. Most Emergency Departments are experiencing overcapacity conditions.
- It would be helpful for towns to advise people that GPS doesn't always work in Vermont, to have their road crews keep a list of towing companies with them, and to place barriers on problem roads where visitors might get stuck. The State is not advising towns to close roads.
- Q12.** Does VEM have any eclipse informational meetings for Emergency Management Directors (EMDs)?
- A12.** No. The VLCT check-in is intended for this. EMDs can contact their VEM regional coordinators too.
- Q13.** Will every town that requested glasses get some?

- A13.** VDTM is hoping to provide glasses to every town that requested them. The number of glasses provided will vary and likely will not be the total number requested.
- Q14.** What qualifies as an official event for the State’s website? Should multiple events in a community be listed separately?
- A14.** Typically, events at separate locations are listed as different events. For the solar eclipse, a community should list one event (Ex. Lunenburg Festival) then link to another site, such as the Town’s website, for the full list of activities and their locations in the community.
- Q15.** The State’s event website has a maximum of 270 characters. Can this be expanded?
- A15.** No, but you can refer people to your website for a full list of events. Ex. “See our website for more details.” Shelburne offered this example of its placeholder listing:
<https://www.shelburnevt.org/569/2024-Solar-Eclipse>.
- Q16.** Has anyone been talking to gas stations to advise them to stock up with fuel?
- A16.** VEM is talking with the Fuel Dealers Association.
- Q17.** Is the State coordinating with downtown organizations for information sharing?
- A17.** Yes.
- Q18.** Where can glasses be requested?
- A18.** Because the State website to request glasses is closed, towns can email Katharine Ingram at Katharine.Ingram@Vermont.gov. Glasses are bundled in groups of 50.
- Q19.** When should towns expect to receive their glasses? Will they be available to distribute at Town Meeting?
- A19.** VDTM hopes to mail glasses so that they arrive before March 5.
- Q20.** Can private entities access these check-ins?
- A20.** Private entities, like nonprofits, can access the recorded Check-in and notes after the event. The live Check-in event is a members-only event for VLCT members.

VEM asked that event hosts contact their municipality to inform them of planned events. This would help the municipality maintain situational awareness and plan for impacts.