

Report of the Health Officer

Fremont's Health Officer Role is undergoing a staffing transition. Gregory Arvanitis has accepted a new full time position. During the transition, he has kindly agreed to continue to support Fremont until a replacement is found. April Phelps continues to serve as the Deputy Health Officer for the community and is pursuing a Doctorate of Nursing Practice at Liberty University.

2019 Health Officer Timeline

Feb 5 - A warning was issued by the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services (NH DPHS) that NH was in the early stages of a Hepatitis A outbreak (food-borne).

Feb 27 - New Hampshire pediatric blood lead level testing requirements changed in April 2018, so a warning was issued by NH DHHS to highlight that all children 1 and 2 years old are required to be tested for lead if they reside in NH.

Apr 6 - April attended the New Hampshire Integrated Emergency Volunteer Training and was involved with a point of dispensing exercise. Additional training included human trafficking and SALT Triage (Sort-Assess-Lifesaving Interventions-Triage/Treatment).

Apr 30 – NH DHHS issued a warning of a nationwide measles outbreak. Measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000, but due to low vaccination rates in some communities, measles has been making a resurgence. For 2019, at least 880 cases of measles in the United States have already been reported from 24 different states. Centers for Disease Control highlight four facts about Measles:

1. Measles can be serious.
2. Measles is very contagious.
3. Your child can still get measles in the US (and abroad).
4. You have the power to protect your child against measles with a safe and effective vaccine.

Measles Facts: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html> for additional information.

May 19 - NH's first confirmed measles case.

May 22 - April attended the Spring New Hampshire Health Officers Association Workshop. The workshop covered a variety of topics to include Public Health Networks, substance use disorders, connections to treatment, mosquito/tick seasons, and legal updates.

June 4 - April attended the 15th annual New Hampshire Emergency Preparedness Conference in Manchester. This conference was an opportunity to network with Emergency Management Officials throughout the State. Some of the conference topics included: How Jurisdictional Risk Assessments Strengthen NH's Health Care, Behavioral Health, and Public Health Systems, Hepatitis A Outbreak Updates, and Emerging Infectious Diseases: Global Cautionary Tales for New Hampshire.

June 17 - A tick-borne disease warning was issued by NHDPHS. *Of note, Fremont taxpayers continue to support mosquito surveillance and spraying, which allows our community to recognize and respond to mosquito threats to our community quickly.*

June 28 - Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) updates were issued by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NH DES). They proposed new PFAS drinking water standards, called Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs), for four commonly identified PFAS compounds.

References: NH DES PFAS website: <https://www4.des.state.nh.us/nh-pfas-investigation/>

July 22 - April attended training on NH DES's new PFAS drinking water standards.

Aug 8 - The first case of Jamestown Canyon Virus infection this season was identified in a New Hampshire resident who also tested positive for Powassan virus co-infection.

Oct 7 – NH DPHS issued a Vaping associated lung warning. Background: As of October 1st, 1,080 cases of lung injury associated with vaping have been reported from 48 states and one U.S. territory; about 80% of patients are under 35 years of age. New Hampshire has identified its first probable case of vaping-associated lung injury consistent with national case definitions. Nationally, the majority of patients with vaping-associated lung injury (78%) reported the use of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) containing products (with or without the use of nicotine products), and these THC-containing products were often obtained from informal sources (e.g., illicit dealers).

Recommendations: E-cigarettes should not be used by youth, young adults, pregnant women, or adults who do not currently use tobacco products. Adults who use e-cigarettes because they have quit smoking should be offered FDA approved cessation therapy, and should not return to smoking cigarettes. People who use e-cigarette products should not obtain them from informal sources, and they should not modify e-cigarette devices or add any substances that are not intended by the manufacturer. Patients who continue to use e-cigarettes or vaping products should carefully monitor themselves and seek medical attention for new respiratory symptoms.

Quit Resources: For those less than 18 years can enroll in “My Life, My Quit” by going to <https://mylifemyquit.com/> or by calling 1 855 891 9989. Adults 18 years of age or older can enroll in “Quit Now-NH” by calling 1 800 QUIT NOW or enroll online at <https://quitnownh.org/>.

Oct 10 - A new warning from NH DPHS was issued over an Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) threat.

Oct 14 - An additional Town mosquito spraying effort took place over the EEE threat concerns.

Oct 30 - Gregg and April attended the Fall NH Health Officers Workshop. Topics included crime and death scenes, disaster behavioral health emergency services, lead poisoning, enforcement actions and legal updates.

Nov 21 - The Health Officers were notified that on October 1 Ellis School tested their unfiltered water, and the Perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA) concentration was 34.9 parts per trillion (ppt). Ambient Groundwater Quality Standards (AGQS) was 11 ppt (one of the strictest water standards nationwide, implemented earlier in the year by New Hampshire Department of Environmental Service, NHDES). Children at Ellis School are instructed to only fill up water bottles at the activated carbon bubblers, which have tested <0.4 ppt for all four commonly identified PFAS compounds.

Since the water finding, on November 26, 2019, as part of a lawsuit, a NH court issued a preliminary injunction against NH's newly adopted PFAS maximum contaminant levels (MCLs). The injunction is scheduled to go into effect on December 31, 2019 and a more robust cost-benefit analysis has been mandated from NHDES by the judge. The State of New Hampshire has been informed by the judge in this case that, as a result of the injunction, affected water systems are not required to comply with the new PFAS sampling requirements set forth earlier in the year by NHDES.

The Health Officers have been in communication with School Officials. Paul Normandin, Director of Facilities at Ellis School, is extremely knowledgeable of the innerworkings of the water supply at Ellis. School Officials and School Board members are taking a proactive stance on the PFNA finding and have begun researching numerous water mitigation systems (which are costly) and include a whole system or dual plumbing with a centralized point of use. Concerned citizens are encouraged to stay abreast of the most recent findings via School Board meetings. There is still much unknown and PFAS contaminant findings are still unfolding. It takes many years of exposure to the contaminants to experience ill health affects and specifics are still being researched. Nationally, federally funded grants have been provided to further research this topic at locations nationwide. Fremont homeowners are encouraged to test their private wells regularly.

References:

Private wells:

https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/well_testing/index.htm

PFOA factsheet: https://www.cdc.gov/biomonitoring/PFOA_FactSheet.html

CDC/ATSDR website on PFAS: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/>

Judge's injunction: https://www.unionleader.com/news/courts/nh-judge-blocks-new-pfas-regulations/article_1f59a076-5458-5154-b4aa-225cc2107363.html

Nov 26 - Influenza activity was increasing- Annual flu vaccines are recommended to prevent flu illness.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory Arvanitis, Health Officer
April Phelps, Deputy Health Officer