

## **NYSGIS Association: Regional Committee, COVID Bi-Weekly Conference Call**

July 8, 2020

Attending:

Bill Ostrander, Southern Tier  
Doug Schuetz, Rockland County  
Keith Ducett Jr, Onondaga County  
Eileen Allen, Clinton County  
Karen Tareen, GeoCove  
Verne LeClair, Vertex Geo  
Alan Leidner, NYC GISMO

Eileen Allen, Clinton County: Reports that to her observation most everyone is wearing mask and mask wearing is not an issue. Has had only one positive case in the past week. During the pandemic a total of about 100 cases. Contact tracing appears to be working. Because Clinton County is rural, residents have plenty of parkland to social distance.

Keith Ducett, Onondaga County: Keith works for County Emergency Dispatch (CAD/911). County DOH provides addresses of those who test positive nightly to be geocoded and entered into the 911 system so that emergency personnel can be alerted if responding to any of those locations. Emergency responders have MDTs in their vehicles to receive these alerts. Dispatch Office gets back to DOH if there are corrections that need to be made in addresses. One issue is that apartment numbers are often not included. In a large multiple dwelling this does not give emergency responders the information they need. This is now getting better after feedback given to DOH. Mask wearing is mixed. There is good compliance at certain stores like Wegman's where the policy is enforced, but not good compliance as stores like Walmart where the policy is not enforced. County Planning has been providing some mapping support for DOH. (Note: Walmart just today 7/15 mandated the wearing of masks at their stores. Keith...they must have been listening to you. – Al)

Doug Schuetz, Rockland County: Number of daily positive tests have declined from the hundreds, early in the pandemic to mostly under ten daily. The County has 325,000 people and has suffered 668 COVID fatalities. In addition to GIS, Doug is also the head of County Planning and Public Transportation. He has been working closely with County DOH. They are pushing use of masks on public transportation. GIS units has developed a number of dashboards providing County specific information. They geocode address data daily provided by DOH. They are able to map to census tract and block group. CommCare contact tracing operation sends them data three times weekly for geocoding. The data is helping them find hot spots. Recently individuals testing positive who had attended a gathering refused to provide contact tracers with information. County Executive issued subpoenas and threatened large fines to get the data. At this point contact tracers are getting about 30% compliance with data requests. Also collecting business data, including geo-coded locations as part of NY Forward. It is difficult to keep track of small business openings. The County promotes mask use through businesses that have opened.

GIS/DOH relationship goes back to West Nile Fever. Doug has found that you need to be careful about how much detailed information about COVID infections is broadcast. Communities are afraid of being ostracized if they have too many cases. DOH must adopt thoughtful policies about what information is made public, while keeping very detailed data secure, to support disease suppression operations.

Bill Ostrander, Southern Tier (Lives in Chemung County, works in Tioga County – Ithaca, familiar with Tompkins and Steuben Counties): An early cluster of 24 deaths at a nursing home in Tioga County, but no more deaths over the past months. Overall cases across the four counties are low. Most people are wearing masks. However no one was wearing masks at an observed Little League practice. There is senior citizen housing in Chemung County but they have not experienced problems. Tioga County DOH uses Survey 1-2-3 for collecting information used by contact tracers. Quarantined individuals fill out daily questionnaires. DOH makes sure they are obeying quarantine orders. Bill was not aware of the use of CommCare in Southern Tier Counties. Tioga County DOH is releasing only countywide data, so no public maps.

Aileen Allen, Clinton: Was curious about attitudes towards grade school and college reopenings in the Fall.

Verne LeClair, Vertex Geo: Has been working with colleges and community colleges. Right now virtual classes may be the preferred way of delivering courses. Things can change. Will wait and see.

### Take-Aways

- The interaction and data sharing between County GIS units and County DOH agencies varies. Some counties (Rockland, Onondaga) share address data for multiple purposes, while the DOH's in other counties (Southern Tier) keep their data locked down. Case data is also locked down in NYC and has been in Westchester. Sharing has been occurring in Suffolk County.
- Contract tracing should be a focus of an upcoming session. It would be useful to identify the different kinds of DOH – GIS data sharing procedures that are going on, and whether geocoding operations to correct and validate addresses are helping with tracing operations. Also, are the spatial analytics being used. Might be useful to have a brief survey of where things stand in each County. (Sharing with DOH? GIS incorporated into contact tracing? Etc.)
- Good mask wearing compliance generally. Problems arise when retail stores do not enforce rules.
- School openings would also be a good topic around which to organize a discussion.