

Somerset Public Schools

Somerset Berkley Regional School District

All Students Achieving Excellence

August 27, 2019

Dear Somerset and Somerset Berkley Families,

Recent news about four human cases of the Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus, including the tragic death of a Fairhaven resident, is a major concern for all of us. Parents of children who participate in outdoor athletics and other activities are particularly concerned. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources have taken steps to control the mosquito population in several areas of the state, including aerial spraying that occurred in parts of Somerset over this past weekend.

In order to minimize the risk of exposure to EEE for our students and school visitors and with an abundance of caution the Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional High School are imposing a curfew on evening outdoor activities. Practices and games will be completed by 6:30 PM as we start the fall athletic season. As we progress through the fall athletic season and sunset occurs earlier, this curfew will be adjusted to an earlier time if EEE infection still remains a risk.

Athletic Director Joseph Francis will be working with coaches and high school administrators to modify the practice and athletic event schedule. Fine and Performing Arts Content Coordinator and SBRHS Marching Band Director David Marshall will be doing the same for the Blue Raider Marching Band. These revised schedules will be shared with families and students once they are developed. We will also provide coaches and other advisors who may participate in outdoor activities with mosquito repellent that contains DEET for use by students. Our cross country athletes and golfers find themselves in heavily wooded areas during practices and competitions. These students should certainly take the precautions of applying insect repellent.

Please encourage your student-athlete or marching band member to apply mosquito repellent. For those families who wish to avoid insect repellents that contain DEET, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offer suggestions for other repellents that contain the oil of Lemon Eucalyptus.

- To find more information from the CDC about EEE and ways to prevent it, click [here](#).
- To use a search tool developed by the EPA to find the insect repellent best for you, click [here](#).
- For more information about EEE from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, click [here](#).

I know parents of elementary students are also concerned about students having morning recess. While mosquitoes pose their greatest risk at dusk, we know that they continue to be a concern until dawn. Presently, dawn begins at approximately 5:45 AM and ends at sunrise shortly after 6:00 AM. Elementary students arrive to school at around 8:30 AM, well after sunrise has occurred at this time of the year and should not pose a risk to our students.

Either my office or individual schools will communicate and update changes regarding this curfew and the threat of EEE to our families as the fall season moves on. I am wishing everyone a fun, successful, happy, and safe school year that is upon us.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Schoonover