

BOARD OF HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT – 2020

STAFF

Director of Public Health – James M. White, Jr.

Senior Environmental Health Specialist – Michael K. Boudreau

Environmental Health Agent – Jane M. Anderson

Sanitarian – Open

Public Health Nurse – Deborah Chaulk

Executive Assistant – Jean M. Cotter

Administrative Assistant – Ingrid C. Fosberg

Substance Prevention & Outreach Program

Catherine Sugarman, Program Manager - Nina Levine, Associate Coordinator - Astrid Dretler, Administrative Coordinator

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The Natick Health Department continues to be a resource for the community by meeting the diverse health needs of the Town. This includes communicable disease, environmental contamination, substance use disorder, prevention strategies and state mandated responsibilities.

Communicable and reportable diseases reported in 2020:

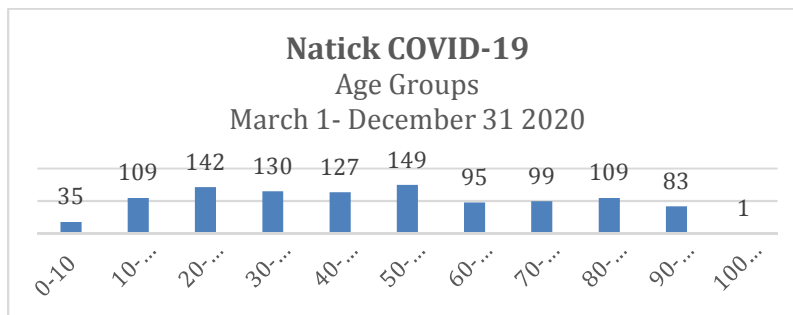
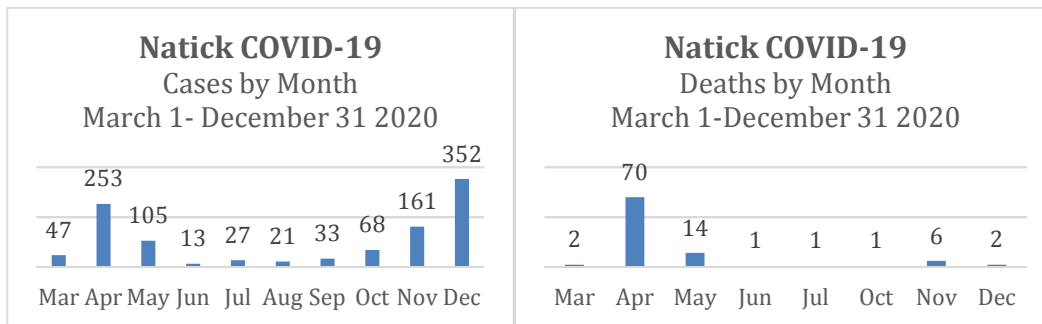
Babesiosis	1	Norovirus	1
Borrelia Miyamotoi	2	Salmonellosis	6
Campylobacteriosis	3	Shigellosis	2
Ehrlichiosis	1	Tuberculosis	3
Group A Strep Invasive	1	Tularemia	1
Group B Strep Invasive	2	Varicella (Chicken Pox)	1
Giardiasis	3	Vibrio	1
Hepatitis B	9	Influenza (Lab Confirmed)	
Hepatitis C	16	Type A	80
Human Granulocytic Anaplasmosis	6	Type B	45
Lyme Disease	74	COVID-19 (Confirmed)	1080
		TOTAL	1329

On March 7, 2020, we received notice of the first positive COVID-19 case in the community, which effectively altered the department's priorities and ways in which services were delivered. This report will reflect upon some of those changes and the data included will show the affect the COVID-19 pandemic presented.

Our clinical services offered by the Public Health Nurse were noticeably affected by the pandemic and by the closure of Town Hall to the public. The immunization program saw a decrease in vaccinations as 91 various adult and pediatric vaccinations were administered in 2020. The annual flu clinics were the exception as the pandemic led to an increase in demand. The Public Health Nurse, volunteers and School Nurses administered 1,760 doses of flu vaccine. The majority of the flu vaccines were delivered during our first ever drive through clinics held on two Saturdays in October at the main DPW garage. This change was implemented to protect both the clinic volunteers and the vaccine recipients. Due to the overwhelming success of the drive through clinics, the department may continue drive through clinics on an annual basis.

A measurable reduction or pause in several other clinical services was noted; such as a reduction on home visits (32), office visits were based upon necessity and scheduled by appointment only while weekly blood pressure clinics were suspended. In a typical year, the department averages 500+ office visits and 125 – 150 home visits annually.

The major focus of the Public Health Nurse turned to the pandemic the beginning of March. From March 1 through December 31, 2020, Natick reported 1080 positive COVID-19 cases. The initial surge occurred during April and May. The summer months showed a significant reduction in cases, case number 500 was reported on October 1. As predicted, a second surge began late October where an additional 580 cases were reported by the end of December. December reported the single highest month totaling 352 cases. Unfortunately, Natick has lost 97 residents to the virus during 2020. (See COVID data charts below). Each case requires extensive contact tracing in order to identify and quarantine close direct contacts to prevent further spread. The majority of the reporting and contact tracing responsibility falls to the local health departments, mainly the public health nurse. We have been fortunate that numerous school nurses volunteered to assist the department in contact tracing since the middle of April. During this time, longtime Public Health Nurse Leila Mercer retired and Deborah Chaulk, R.N. took over that position in June. The transition was seamless.



The daily operations of the Environmental Inspection Program was also highly affected by the pandemic. Most of the responsibility of initiation, guidance and enforcement of the Governor’s COVID-19 Executive Orders were handed down to the local level and ultimately the local health departments. In addition to the Executive Order responsibilities, the staff continued to carry out daily operations, although limited due to the pandemic. The staff conducted 605 inspections on 386 various permitted food establishments and 4263 other inspections, investigations, plan reviews and consultations relevant to environmental sanitation for a total of 4868. This past year, the department had a noticeable increase in construction permits for septic system repairs or replacements. This was in large part due to overuse from residents honoring the pandemic “Stay at Home” policy and the robust real estate market. In spite of the pandemic, the construction boom in Natick continues. Other than a slight drop in projects during the months of April and May, the pace of construction during the second half of 2020 may have surpassed the same period of 2019. The Health Department is involved in several phases of the construction process and the workload increased with the newly instituted Stormwater Bylaw. In addition to the daily operations, the staff recorded 900+ COVID-19 related complaints, inspections, investigations, consultations and enforcements. The majority of COVID related decisions within the community were made with oversight or input by the health department. This was all accomplished while short-handed a staff position for 5 out of the last 6 months of the calendar year.

The department reviewed 994 Title 5 inspections, building applications, grease trap and septic system pump outs; reviewed and corresponded on 63 Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals cases; issued 77 quarantine notices by the Animal Inspector. The staff also issued and/or approved 1,398 various permits.

While many communities cancelled their annual hazardous waste collection day and despite the pandemic, on May 9, 2020, we hosted our 34th Annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day. 253 residential households took part in disposing of their materials in an effort to protect our environment. Natick continues to participate in the multi-community reciprocal collection program sponsored by Department of Environmental Protection though alternate dates were limited due to multiple community cancellations.

Annual receipts to the department totaled \$226,419.18. From that total, \$207,061.25 was deposited into the Town’s General Fund; the remaining \$19,437.93 was deposited into the following designated Board of Health Accounts: Immunization Revolving \$9,517.93, Tobacco Revolving \$4,600, Prevention & Outreach Gift Fund \$5,320. The department also applied and received the following grant funds in 2020:

Public Health Trust Fund – COVID-19 Assistance Grant \$27,598.00

Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Science – Flu Vaccination Assistance Grant \$3,418.23

MetroWest Health Foundation – COVID-19 Assistance & Relief Grant \$15,000.00

MetroWest Health Foundation – Equity and Diversity Grant under the Substance Prevention & Outreach Program \$15,000.00

The department has recently signed into an agreement to participate in a 12 community regional tobacco control program aimed at reducing youth access and use of tobacco and vaping products. The program is funded through a one-year state grant.

The annual report of the Substance Prevention and Outreach Program under the administration of the Health Department is located in a separate report.

