COVID-19 Community Innovation Stories, Week of May 25, 2020

In the face of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the country is seeing innovations in communities that highlight the best of human ingenuity. We highlight these stories to show how many are helping those around them, and prompt everyone to think about how they can help others.[1]

Virus Repelling Textile Technology

Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh School of Engineering have developed a textile coating for personal protective equipment (PPE) and other high-contact surfaces that can repel blood and saliva and prevent viruses from adhering to surfaces. This coating can also endure multiple rounds of washing, scrubbing, and scraping. The coating is intended have broad applications in healthcare and everything from hospital gowns to waiting room chairs may benefit from this innovation.[2]

Virtual Disaster Assistance

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency has been sending postcards to reach residents that include methods to virtually apply for disaster assistance for damage sustained from severe storms and flooding in February in lieu of going door-to-door. In situations where a physical presence is required, the agency has collaborated with nonprofits to manage three disaster assistance centers, where staff and volunteers wear masks and adhere to social distancing guidelines.[3]

Virtual Onboarding

New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM) has created a step-by-step guidebook for onboarding new team members in a virtual environment. The guidebook tracks employee onboarding using a color-coded spreadsheet to track issuance of devices such as laptops, cell phones, and other inventory for employees who are either newly hired

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[1] This document contains references and links to non-federal resources and organizations. This information is meant solely for informational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement of any non-federal entity by FEMA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or the U.S. government.

[2] 2020 PITT Swanson Engineering, https://www.engineering.pitt.edu/News/2020/Virus-Repelling-Textile-Coating/

[3] 2020 SunHerald, Emergency managers working nonstop to prep Gulf Coast for hurricanes amid coronavirus, https://www.sunherald.com/news/local/article242687106.html

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or who have transitioned to working from home. In addition, the department is attempting to scale up its technological support in response to the increasing need for virtual support during the pandemic.[4]

Smart911 Application

New Orleans is using a new technology that relies on artificial intelligence and cloud computing to provide 911 and 311 call centers with enhanced location, video, and chat capabilities. Callers can volunteer personal data via app-based profiles that provide responders important data, including COVID-19 status, without asking for it. Responders are able to remotely triage callers via video chat and begin treatment while putting distance between the patient and other people.[5]

Staying Connected Phone Program

The Ohio Department of Aging introduced a free, automated daily well-being check-in phone service for residents in Ohio for people ages 60 and older in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The "Staying Connected" phone program is available 7AM-6PM daily and contacts participants within the one-hour window the user selects upon enrollment. The service confirms the well-being of an individual and then offers to connect them to the local Area Agency on Aging for further information or assistance. If participants do not answer after three attempts, a call is placed to the alternate contact on file. The program is intended to extend beyond the pandemic.[6]

#WeAllMove Web Platform

The World Economic Forum COVID Action Platform, in partnership with a private company, created the #WeAllMove web platform. The platform allows users to find mobility operators around the world for different needs, such as access to vehicles for grocery delivery, alternative commuting options, and commuting solutions for both healthcare and essential workers. Some options for healthcare workers are discounted or free.[7]

FEMA's Best Practice Initiative

There are extraordinary efforts nationwide to support personnel and resource needs to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. FEMA is working to highlight these efforts and encourage everyone to think about what they can do to be a part of providing solutions to help. Visit https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/best-practices for more information.

Topics for the "Best Practices" series are generated from crowd-sourced suggestions. Have an idea? Let us research it! Organizations and individuals can e-mail best practices or lessons learned to fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov.

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[4] 2020 NYC Emergency Management, The Evolution of Technical Support During New York City's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, https://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/about/press-releases/20200516_pr_nycem-technical-support-in-city-response-covid-19-pandemic.page

[5] 2020 Government Technology, New Tech Aids 911 Centers During COVID-19 Crisis, https://www.govtech.com/public-safety/New-Tech-Aids-911-Centers-During-COVID-19-Crisis.html

[6] 2020 Government Technology, Ohio Department of Aging Launches Welfare Check Service, https://www.govtech.com/health/Ohio-Department-of-Aging-Launches-Welfare-Check-Service.html

[7] 2020 World Economic Forum, COVID-19 proves mobility systems require new solutions to meet changing needs, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/covid-19-proves-mobility-systems-require-new-solutions-to-meet-changing-needs/

For more information on how to help during COVID-19, visit [FEMA's website for information on donations and volunteering.](#)

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