

# COVID-19 Community Innovation Stories, Week of June 29, 2020

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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.<sup>1</sup>

## Workforce Protections

### Employee COVID-19 Screening

A healthcare company has collaborated with a technology company to launch [ProtectWell](#), a free smartphone application that allows employers to screen employees for COVID-19 symptoms as workplaces reopen. ProtectWell screens employees and recommends protocols based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and the latest scientific consensus regarding COVID-19. Employee health information will be managed in accordance with occupational health laws to maintain privacy.<sup>2</sup> The app is also customizable by industry. For example, employees in nursing homes will require more frequent symptoms checks than workers in other industries due to their higher levels of potential COVID-19 exposure.<sup>3</sup> Similar to the app, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Reopening Business Digital Resource Center offers a [template questionnaire](#) for employee screening that was compiled based on requirements or recommendations from various states and U.S. Chamber member companies.

### Agricultural Worker Safety

In Washington State, the governor released new health and safety standards for farms and agricultural warehouses to ensure worker safety. Under these standards, employers must install portable handwashing stations within 110 yards of employees who work outdoors. To reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread among workers in temporary

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 2020 Microsoft, UnitedHealth Group and Microsoft collaborate to launch ProtectWell™ protocol and app to support return-to-workplace planning and COVID-19 symptom screening, <https://news.microsoft.com/2020/05/15/unitedhealth-group-and-microsoft-collaborate-to-launch-protectwell-protocol-and-app-to-support-return-to-workplace-planning-and-covid-19-symptom-screening/>.

<sup>3</sup> 2020 CNBC, Microsoft and UnitedHealth offer companies free app to screen employees for coronavirus, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/05/15/microsoft-and-unitedhealth-offer-companies-free-app-to-screen-employees-for-coronavirus.html>



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housing, the state recommended that workers be placed in groups no larger than 15 to eat, work, live, and take transportation together.<sup>4</sup>

## Greenhouse Worker Safety

In North Carolina, a nursery has grouped greenhouse employees into "pods" of five individuals who share work stations and tools, water dispensers, break areas, personal storage areas, permanent or portable toilets, and hand-washing stations. Pod work stations are spaced six feet apart.<sup>5</sup>

## Business and Health Organization Assistance Programs

### Small Business Online Resources

A private insurance company has partnered with a startup accelerator to launch a free four-week [online course](#) to help small business owners and non-profits as they alter operations and search for funding opportunities during the pandemic. This program will also feature webinars for topics like customer safety and marketing, as well as virtual roundtables for participants to share challenges and best practices with each other. Participants may also enroll in one-on-one virtual consultations with experts who can provide industry-specific advice to different businesses for identifying and using available COVID-19 resources.<sup>6</sup>

### Health and Emergency Management Online Resources

A telehealth and communication platform has launched a free [funding assistance initiative](#) to help healthcare, emergency management, and public health organizations determine their funding assistance eligibility and secure COVID-19-related funding. The initiative provides guides for different types of funding opportunities (e.g., telehealth and rural emergency medical communications) and shares information on deadlines, program websites, and application tips.<sup>7</sup>

## Safely Resuming Athletics

### Recreational Golf

Golf courses that have reopened are restricting play involving different households to groups of two. Only one person is allowed per golf cart. Flagsticks cannot be touched or removed, and the holes are modified so that golfers do not have to reach all the way in to remove a ball. Golf courses have also removed high-touch items, such as rakes in

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<sup>4</sup> 2020 The News Tribune, Inslee announces additional COVID-19 safety standards for agricultural workers, <https://www.thenewstribune.com/latest-news/article243074266.html>

<sup>5</sup> Greenhouse Grower, How Two Leading Growers Look Different — and Better? — in Response to COVID-19, <https://www.greenhousegrower.com/management/how-two-leading-growers-look-different-and-better-in-response-to-covid-19/>

<sup>6</sup> 2020 American Family Insurance, American Family Insurance and gener8tor offering COVID-19 response program, <https://newsroom.amfam.com/american-family-insurance-and-gener8tor-offering-covid-19-response-program/>

<sup>7</sup> 2020 Journal of Emergency Medical Services, Pulsara Launches Free Funding Resource to Help Emergency Management, Hospitals and EMS Find and Secure COVID-19 Funding, <https://www.jems.com/2020/06/18/pulsara-launches-free-funding-resource-to-help-emergency-management-hospitals-and-ems-find-and-secure-covid-19-funding/>

fairway and greenside bunkers, ball washers, and benches. One golf course recorded golfers' contact information for future notification if another golfer later tests positive for COVID-19.<sup>8</sup>

## Youth Athletics

Although youth sports practices and games in Maryland will lift limits on outdoor gatherings, the Anne Arundel Department of Recreation and Parks is encouraging coaches, players, and spectators to wear masks until they enter the field. Training sessions for athletes will also occur in small, separate groups. For one youth lacrosse club, tournaments will be limited to one day and parents will be seated in their cars for the duration of the game.<sup>9</sup>

## Public Transportation Crowd Management

A software company that supports public transit systems has created an Automatic Passenger Counting (APC) system that can monitor load capacities in public transportation vehicles in real time to prevent overcrowding. After each stop the vehicle makes, a unit on board calculates the occupancy rate as a percentage, based on the transportation agency's predetermined values. This information is then transmitted to the dispatcher as color codes. Green indicates an acceptable passenger load, yellow warns the dispatcher that the vehicle is reaching its limit, and red indicates the vehicle has reached capacity. This system can help transportation agencies make alterations to transit schedules and provide passengers with additional information regarding safety levels before boarding.<sup>10</sup>

## Public Preparation for Hurricane Season

After the cancellation of the annual hurricane exposition in Orange County, Florida, where hurricane season information guides and weather radios would normally be distributed to residents, Orange County firefighters have been distributing guides and radios to residents while out on call.<sup>11</sup>

## Data Science for Capturing Resource Status

### Artificial Intelligence for Supply Chain Predictions

The U.S. Department of Defense's Joint Artificial Intelligence Center (JAIC) built a prototype artificial intelligence (AI) tool that collects data from publicly available sources or corporate partnerships to track food supply. Earlier in the pandemic, the tool had been used to aggregate and track data on ventilators, masks, and medical supplies.

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<sup>8</sup> 2020 NPR, Yelling 'Fore' Again ... But 2 At A Time, <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/08/852494289/yelling-fore-again-but-2-at-a-time>

<sup>9</sup> 2020 Capital Gazette, Sports are returning in Anne Arundel in ways big and small: Lacross is adapting quickly, <https://www.capitalgazette.com/sports/ac-cs-sports-returning-lacrosse-clubs-coronavirus-20200617-3bdiiund6fhgifirjxmbcfsx4-story.html>

<sup>10</sup> 2020 Mass Transit, INIT's real-time passenger counting solution aids with social distancing on transit, <https://www.masstransitmag.com/technology/miscellaneous/press-release/21141661/init-innovations-in-transportation-inc-init-realtime-passenger-counting-solution-aids-with-social-distancing-on-transit>

<sup>11</sup> 2020 Orlando Sentinel, Preparing for the big one: Orange County emergency chief balances COVID-19 with hurricane threat, <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/weather/hurricane/os-ne-hurricane-season-covid-19-precautions-20200622-jogifyzrnjeg3getr3poewvong-story.html>

Although the tool is able to focus on specific zip codes, it maintains the privacy of individual purchases by only following trends to help with resource allocation and predicting shortages.<sup>12</sup>

## Dashboard for Emergency Management Resource Allocation

Students, faculty, and staff at the Indiana University (IU) Crisis Technologies Innovation Lab (CTIL) have collaborated with a software company that focuses on disaster management to produce a free public dashboard to help emergency managers quickly gather information on resources available in the COVID-19 environment. The [Data-science Integrated Collaboration Environment \(DICE\) dashboard](#) merges all datasets about various aspects of community infrastructure (e.g., police, fire, and medical) into one place. For example, the tool can gather data on available shelters or schools that can be used as temporary hospitals.<sup>13</sup>

## Alleviating COVID-19 Burden at Hospitals Reaching Capacity

Amid a recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Texas, Texas Children's Hospital has started admitting both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 adult patients to relieve the strain on other hospitals in the area. A special isolation unit at Texas Children's Hospital's West Campus will receive COVID-19 adult patients. Children's hospitals in New York City and Chicago implemented similar practices earlier in the pandemic when outbreak numbers in the two cities were significant.<sup>14,15</sup>

## Incentivizing Blood Donation During the Pandemic

To prepare for the return of surgical procedures as states progress through reopening phases, the [American Red Cross](#) recently began offering testing for COVID-19 antibodies in all blood, platelet, and plasma donations to encourage more donations amid declining numbers during the pandemic. The Red Cross will deliver results of the antibody test to donors for free. Although a positive antibody test result is not necessarily conclusive for COVID-19 infection or immunity, the test is Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved.<sup>16</sup>

## 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.

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<sup>12</sup> 2020 Defense One, The Pentagon Will Use AI to Predict Panic Buying, COVID-19 Hotspots,

<https://www.defenseone.com/technology/2020/04/pentagon-will-use-ai-predict-panic-buying-covid-19-hotspots/164820/>

<sup>13</sup> 2020 Indiana University, Free, public dashboard helps emergency managers share critical COVID-19 information,

<https://itnews.iu.edu/articles/2020/Free-public-dashboard-helps-emergency-managers-share-critical-COVID-19-information-.php>

<sup>14</sup> 2020 Forbes, Texas Children's Hospital Starts Admitting Adult Patients As Coronavirus Cases In The State Soar To Record

Levels, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/victoriaforster/2020/06/23/texas-childrens-hospital-starts-admitting-adult-patients-as-coronavirus-cases-in-the-state-soar-to-record-levels/#93392917c549>

<sup>15</sup> 2020 KHOU 11, Texas Children's Hospital admitting adult patients to free up hospital beds in Houston,

<https://www.khou.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/texas-childrens-hospital-admitting-adult-patients-as-covid-19-cases-continue-to-rise/285-5aa0a132-a318-4a41-81b3-6659086c2ef7>

<sup>16</sup> 2020 American Red Cross, Red Cross Announces Testing of all Blood Donations for COVID-19 Antibodies,

<https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/press-release/2020/red-cross-announces-testing-of-all-blood-donations-for-covid-19-antibodies.html>

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](mailto:fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov).

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

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