

COVID-19 Community Innovation Stories, Week of August 3, 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

Natural Hazard Evacuations

Evacuation Registration Venue

To prepare for wildfire evacuations in California, the American Red Cross is planning to designate covered parking lots, instead of community centers, as temporary evacuation points. Southern California residents who are evacuating from wildfires will be directed to one of 37 parking lots throughout San Diego County, where they will be able to remain in their cars as they wait for firefighters to control the situation and register with the Red Cross to receive additional information about finding shelter. Most of these new temporary evacuation points will be local school parking lots.^{2,3}

Non-Congregate Sheltering Map

To prepare for hurricane evacuations in Florida, the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) has released an [interactive map](#) that displays the locations of facilities throughout the state that have expressed interest in supporting non-congregate sheltering. The map denotes the Florida Building Code (FBC) design wind speed thresholds in various areas across Florida and provides details on guest capacity, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) rooms, generator hook-up, gathering space, and food service. The site also provides a link to a [form](#) for hotels or other private lodging facilities to indicate their interest in participating.⁴

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 kpbs, How To Evacuate From Wildfire During Coronavirus Pandemic, <https://www.kpbs.org/news/2020/jun/11/how-evacuate-wildfire-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>

³ 2020 abc 10 News, Changes to fire evacuation centers due to pandemic, <https://www.10news.com/news/local-news/san-diego-news/changes-to-fire-evacuation-centers-due-to-pandemic>

⁴ 2020 Florida Division of Emergency Management, Non-Congregate Shelters, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=cac00ae8d17a4c2caf74ed1774e2ca51&extent=-10019555.139%2C2841423.7198%2C-8515885.9186%2C3646764.2498%2C102100>



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Safety Measures for Therapy Dogs

Medical institutions with volunteer therapy dog programs, such as Mount Sinai in New York and Cook Children's Medical Center in Texas, have implemented safety measures for dogs and their handlers to continue service during the COVID-19 pandemic. Handlers now remove the dogs' vests before visiting a patient and regularly clean the dogs' coats, paws, and leashes. The therapy dogs may also provide emotional support for pediatric patients who may feel anxiety about COVID-19.⁵

Repurposing Resources for Food Distribution

In Queens, New York, a pastor has converted a 100,000-square foot building that housed a church and school into a food distribution operation. The gym, cafeteria, classrooms, and hallways all store food that is quickly moved out to families in need. This operation feeds up to 5,500 people a day. In Manhattan, New York, the director of operations and facilities for an arts center has hired out-of-work lighting designers, theater technicians, and performers to assist a social services organization and a neighborhood group with food distribution efforts.⁶

Reopening Schools for the Deaf

To prepare for partial in-person reopening, the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD) has purchased clear masks, face shields, and plexiglass for teachers to stand behind while lecturing. These resources will help students, especially those who are not yet fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), lip read and gather context clues from facial expressions. To address the impacts of on-campus housing closures on students who cannot commute to campus, the school is considering sending staff members to cities throughout New Mexico to operate learning hubs for those who opt for in-person learning.⁷

Mobile Applications to Support Telehealth

Mobile Health Suite for Providers

To assist military healthcare providers using telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Defense Health Agency (DHA) Connected Health's Education and Training team has developed a customizable digital [prescription \(Rx\) pad](#) that allows providers to "prescribe" mobile health applications to enhance their patients' treatment plans. The Rx pad allows providers to easily access a suite of department-approved tools for continuously monitoring their patients' health progress remotely. There are 24 mobile health applications approved by the DHA and Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) and topics range from smoking cessation to fitness and mood tracking.⁸

Mobile Mental Health and Self-Care

⁵ 2020 The New York Times, Meet This Popular Essential Worker. And Give Her a Scratch Behind the Ear., <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/14/parenting/therapy-dogs-kids.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>

⁶ 2020 The New York Times, Hunger Is Worsening. Here Are 7 Ways New Yorkers Are Addressing It, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/11/nyregion/coronavirus-hunger-relief-nyc.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>

⁷ 2020 Governing, For Deaf Students, eLearning and Masks Increase Challenges, <https://www.governing.com/community/For-Deaf-Students-eLearning-and-Masks-Increase-Challenges.html>

⁸ 2020 Health.mil, Innovative RX pad creates path for prescribing mobile health technology, <https://health.mil/News/Articles/2020/07/15/Innovative-RX-pad-creates-path-for-prescribing-mobile-health-technology>

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has developed a free mobile application called “[COVID Coach](#)” for veterans, service members, and the general public. The app offers tips on parenting and caregiving in the COVID-19 environment, remote working, and creating a personal support network. Although it is not intended to replace professional mental health evaluation or care, COVID Coach is a self-care resource that offers coping tools and helps patients monitor their mental health progress over time.⁹

Air Travel Safety

Disinfecting Plane Interiors

A major airline will test a new ultraviolet disinfecting machine to clean the interior of passenger planes. The machines are approximately the size of a beverage cart and feature folding arms that can reach tight spaces around seats, lavatories, and galleys. The airline will deploy eight of these machines to cover the length of an airplane within 10 minutes.¹⁰

Safety Measures for Passengers and Flight Crews

International airlines and airports have introduced safety measures to protect passengers and flight crews from COVID-19 transmission by increasing access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and enabling social distancing where possible. For example, an international airline is supplying flight crews with disposable gowns and providing all passengers with face shields at check-in or boarding gates. At an airport in the United Kingdom (UK), passengers can pre-book a 15-minute security screening slot to help the airport manage passenger volume at security.¹¹

FEMA’s Best Practice Initiative

There are extraordinary efforts nationwide, and from partner nations, 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.

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

FEMA does not endorse any non-government entities, organizations, or services. Claims made by third parties have not been independently verified by FEMA.

⁹ 2020 U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Mobile Apps: COVID Coach, https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/COVID_coach_app.asp

¹⁰ 2020 The Points Guy, JetBlue to trial ‘GermFalcon’ UV light machine on its planes, https://thepointsguy.com/news/jetblue-germfalcon-honeywell-uv-cabin-system/?utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=thepointsguy&utm_content=276BA83A-D19A-11EA-B5B1-62AF4744363C&tw=1&utm_term=editorial&utm_medium=social

¹¹ 2020 Globetrender, 12 Innovations Making Air Travel Safer in the Age of COVID-19, <https://globetrender.com/2020/07/08/innovations-coronavirus-flying-air-travel-safety/>