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University of Maine System @1U4ME Our world needs higher education now more than ever. We can't wait to have students back on our campuses starting August 31. Today, we announced our science-based plan to do it safely. Learn more at maine.edu/together. #togetherformaine #HealthyUHealthyME



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UMaine, Maine CDC and Maine National Guard Partner To Overcome Urgent Shortage Of Key N95 Mask, Testing Materials

18 MAY 2020

The University of Maine has manufactured more than 2,200 bottles of testing solutions required to perform aerosol fit tests of N95 masks in accordance with the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration protocols for testing personal protective equipment, known as PPE. Maine public sector enforcement guidance requires that state and local government health care employers perform an initial qualitative fit test for employees using an N95 mask for respiratory protection.

“At UMaine we are deploying the innovation and flexibility we have developed to support our industry partners to find solutions for Maine’s COVID-19 challenges,” said University of Maine and University of Machias President Joan Ferrini-Mundy. “On our campus and across our university system, we are proud of the ingenuity and selflessness of the faculty, staff and students who are contributing to Maine’s pandemic response.”

UMaine production of the solutions came at the request of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention in response to a national shortage of fit-testing kits and test solutions. The initiative is part of an agreement between the University of Maine System and the Maine Emergency Management Agency to coordinate resources and efforts in support of the state’s COVID-19 response.

The UMS Office of Strategic Procurement was able to source the materials needed to produce denatonium benzoate solution, more commonly known as Bitrex and one of four chemicals that can be used to conduct a qualitative fit test. The UMaine Process Development Center, the same facility that has been producing hospital-grade hand sanitizer in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, produced the solution (production image one and two) and made its first delivery to the Maine CDC earlier this month.

“We here at the Maine CDC cannot express enough gratitude to the University of Maine System team for their help during the state’s time in need,” says John Hernandez, medical countermeasures manager at the Maine CDC. “The testing solution is being deployed to the Maine National Guard fit testing teams, fire departments, and other agencies that are conducting fit testing. These testing teams are helping many agencies ensure that their staff are properly fit tested for the correct N95 size to help reduce the spread and transmission of COVID-19 among first responders and frontline health care workers.”

[Learn more about this critical public health partnership here.](#)

