

CASE STUDY

Protecting Responders During The Covid-19 Pandemic

Washington State equips responders with resources, mental and physical health support

THE CHALLENGE:

Medical emergencies including sudden cardiac arrest didn't stop during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet the pandemic presented unique challenges to EMS teams and first responders, who had to continue to provide emergency care amidst unprecedented circumstances. These essential teams on the front lines faced issues ranging from PPE shortages to mental and physical health concerns, while dealing with constantly evolving guidelines and work environments.

THE RESPONSE:

Supported by the HeartRescue project, the University of Washington formed partnerships with fire, EMS, and law enforcement organizations across Washington state to address the challenges facing responders. HeartRescue provided funding for programs to protect responders by providing access to specialized equipment, counseling and mental health support and physical health assessments and screenings.

- As one example, the University of Washington Engineering Department developed a prototype and produced ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) light boxes to decontaminate face masks, enabling safe re-use by EMS stations.
- With support from the Medtronic Foundation, the Medic One Foundation, King County EMS, and the University of Washington Population Health Initiative, the team produced and delivered more than 60 UVGI decontamination units to EMS stations and trained the teams in operating the units.
- The UVGI units have become essential equipment. More than 200,000 masks have undergone UVGI treatment and been re-used, extending PPE supply and saving substantial resources. The savings is estimated at more than \$2 million.

The partnerships have helped thousands of emergency care providers and resulted in a stronger system supporting communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learn more [here](#).

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