



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 8, 2020

Ford, GM Making Face Shields and Ventilators for Hospitals and First Responders

The Ford Motor Company, which has been manufacturing clear plastic face shields for hospitals and first responders all over the United States at its factory in Plymouth, Michigan, since March 23, shipped its one-millionth protective shield to New York City on April 4.

More than 190,000 of the face shields are on their way or have been delivered to hard-hit New York and New Jersey, the company said.



Ford has said that the face shields fully protect the face and eyes from accidental contact with liquids, and when paired with N95 respirators can be a more effective way to limit potential exposure to coronavirus than N95 respirators alone.

AP reported that about 260 employees represented by the United Auto Workers union are now making 225,000 shields per day on two shifts. It is significant that all of these employees have volunteered for this assignment and could be receiving most of their pay while staying at home. However, they have stepped up and are giving their labor to help others.

In addition to Ford, General Motors Co., Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, Toyota, Volkswagen, and other automakers and parts suppliers have mobilized to build facemasks and respirators to help protect people from the COVID-19 virus.

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Ford and GM will also build ventilators. Ford's plant in Rawsonville, Michigan, is being converted into a ventilator factory, and the company has promised to deliver 50,000 by July 4.

Production of ventilators at GM starts next week, and hundreds of employees will be back at work and need to be kept healthy, CBS News reported.

"The biggest challenge, number one, is making employees feel comfortable coming back to work because right now they're in their homes, it's a safe environment, they can control it," CBS quoted Dr. Jeffery Hess, GM's medical director.

A statement posted at Ford's website noted that the company is joining forces with other firms, including 3M and GE Healthcare, to lend its manufacturing and engineering expertise to help quickly expand production of urgently needed medical equipment and supplies for healthcare workers, first responders, and patients fighting coronavirus.

"This is such a critical time for America and the world. It is a time for action and cooperation. By coming together across multiple industries, we can make a real difference for people in need and for those on the front lines of this crisis," said Bill Ford, Ford's executive chairman.



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A report from Bloomberg observed that the Canadian hockey equipment manufacturer Bauer has also shifted gears, and instead of making visors for hockey helmets it will make medical visors for those fighting the coronavirus pandemic. Bauer vice president of global marketing Mary-Kay Messier said the company already had 100,000 devices ready for distribution. They are expected to first go to doctors and nurses in Canada, and then to the United States.

CBS News observed that the effort by Ford, as well as General Motors, during the coronavirus pandemic is reminiscent of World War II, when Detroit automakers built trucks, tanks, and even planes. The plant where Ford will assemble ventilators is just down the road from the airfield factory where it once built B-24 bombers.

Image: [Michael Sheehan/Wikimedia Commons](#)

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com



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