

Surface Warfare Center Technology Division, Maryland Distillery Partner to Produce Hand Sanitizer

INDIAN HEAD, Md. – The Naval Surface Warfare Center’s Indian Head Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technology Division (IHEODTD) is helping one business give back to emergency responders in dire need of virus-killing hand sanitizers, the division said in an April 6 release.

Following Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan’s executive order limiting social gatherings and the closing of nonessential businesses, Blue Dyer Distilling Co. of Waldorf, Maryland, saw that in their downtime they could fill a niche in the community.

Understanding local first responders were running critically low on hand sanitizer, they pivoted their operations from manufacturing spirits to the production of the much-needed sanitizer. An agreement was signed April 6 with IHEODTD to allow the two organizations to speed the release of the product to first responders.

To date, Dunbar said his distillery has produced about 200 gallons of hand sanitizer, which has been delivered to more than 30 state, local and government agencies.

“We are providing materials, facilities and operators on-site to aid with the large-scale production of this critical commodity,” said Chris Wilhelm, the IHEODTD Office of Research and Technology Applications lead. “This is an opportunity to help a local business do some good in an area where we have the materials and capabilities to aid them. If we can find a unique way to leverage our assets during this crisis, we are going to find a way to do so.”

The agreement allows for Blue Dyer to receive raw materials produced at the command for use at their distillery to produce the hand sanitizer. The agreement is in effect for six months, with the potential for more time added based on need.

Walker Dunbar, the distillery's founder and co-owner, said that with help from IHEODTD, he and Blue Dyer co-founder Ryan Vierheller are situated to produce large quantities of hand sanitizers to local and federal agencies as well as other organizations serving the public interest.

"Once we realized there was an immediate need for life, health and public safety, we prepared our facility for full-time production," Walker said. "The assistance we received from Dr. Wilhelm and the rest of the command has been amazing."