

Zapping Covid: Tech sector takes aim at virus with new gadgetry

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Draganfly says its drones, which have been deployed to disinfect stadiums during the pandemic, can be used to monitor social distancing and can also detect changes in vital signs which may be early indicators of Covid-19

From virus-zapping drones to smart masks to disease-predicting wearables, the tech sector is showcasing ways to detect and mitigate the

coronavirus outbreak.

The health crisis which forced this week's 2021 Consumer Electronics Show online has also spawned innovations for fighting the pandemic.

Drone maker Draganfly showcased its [camera technology](#) which can be used to offer alerts on social distancing, and also detect changes in people's [vital signs](#) which may be early indicators of Covid-19 infections.

Draganfly chief Cameron Chell said the "vital intelligence assessment" system can be "deployed from any camera, not just a drone camera," to measure vital signs such as heart or respiratory rate and blood pressure.

The company has been deploying its drones, which can spray disinfectant in large public spaces like stadiums, similar to other robotic disinfection systems being deployed during the pandemic.

"This allows public places to have the opportunity to be opened up again," Chell told a CES online briefing. "We're completely overwhelmed with demand."

In a similar vein to the Draganfly system, Taiwan-based FaceHeart demonstrated its software which can be installed in cameras for contactless measurement of vital signs.



This undated image Courtesy of BioIntelliSense, Inc., shows a woman placing the BioButton, one of the wearables shown in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic

FaceHeart said its algorithms scan for signs of severe shortness of breath, [high fever](#), dehydration, elevated heart rate and other symptoms which are early indicators of Covid-19.

One new wearable tech device being shown at CES from Colorado-based BioIntelliSense is a coin-sized wearable sticker called BioButton which can detect changes in vital signs that could be linked to Covid-19.

The patch, meant to be worn on a person's chest, can detect skin temperature, [heart rate](#), coughing frequency and more, according to the company.

The BioButton device, which is paired with [mobile applications](#),

"represents a significant advancement in making continuous medical-grade monitoring reliable, effortless and cost-effective," said company CEO James Mault.

"The convenience of the BioButton will support a range of clinical use cases... and mass market use to enable safe return to work or school."

Smart masks, doorbells

Startup AirPop Health unveiled its Active+ Smart Mask which captures breathing-related data and incorporates a sensor which can tell wearers when to replace their mask's filter.



The all-digital 2021 Consumer Electronics Show, which featured some 1,800 exhibitors and dozens of streamed presentations, concluded on Thursday

"This product embodies the AirPop mission—to help people better understand and take control of their respiratory health through a human-centered approach to design, science and technology," said Chris Hosmer, AirPop's founder.

The gaming tech firm Razer meanwhile showed its Project Hazel mask which features rechargeable ventilators and a transparent design "so those around you can view facial cues such as a smile or laugh and allow the hard of hearing to lip read what the wearer is saying," according to the company.

Another gadget unveiled at the all-digital show was the Ettie video doorbell from the smart home startup Plott, which takes the temperature of a visitor at the front door with an infrared sensor, allowing consumers to see if a fever is present.

Meanwhile Taiwan-based electronics firm iWavenology introduced its iDistance wearable device which can be used to prevent infections by sounding an alarm when people fail to respect social distancing guidelines.

The tags can be worn around a person's arm and can function in a workplace or outdoor environment.

"The pandemic requires everyone to think about innovative solutions to ensure safety for all employees at the workplace," founder Shau-Gang Mao said. "That is why iWavenology created a simple device that generates an alarm whenever a person comes too close to another."

The all-digital trade event, which was forced to move to an online format because of the pandemic, included some 1,800 exhibitors and concluded Thursday.

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