

Nibbling cats and COVID masks: First look at CES tech show

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CES, one of the world's largest trade fairs, is pushing ahead with an in-person edition after being online-only last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A finger-nibbling plush cat and a cooling fan for the ever-present anti-COVID mask: the CES tech show in Las Vegas on Monday offered a

glimpse of the offerings at this year's meet-up.

CES, one of the world's largest trade fairs, is pushing ahead with an in-person edition after being online-only last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here are timely—and quirky—products that will be pitched at the Wednesday to Friday convention:

Cooling masks

Entrepreneur Eric Fouchard got tired of feeling hot and stuffy under his anti-COVID mask, so he came up with a tiny ventilation system that can be mounted under a face covering.

The fan is held in place with a magnet assembly and is powered by a small rechargeable battery held in a strap that passes over the back of a user's neck.

"The first way to use it is when you are on a plane or a train," he told AFP. "The second one is when you are working and you need to remove the mist on your glasses."

"The filtration of the mask stays the same," Fouchard, a Frenchman, said of his Aeronest system.

'Sweet biting'

The Japanese phrase "amagami" translates roughly to "sweet biting" in English.

"We find it very comfortable and we want to bring it to the world,"

Japanese entrepreneur Shunsuke Aoki said.



Eric Fouchard demonstrates the Aeronest mask ventilation kit.

He transformed that impulse into a small, battery-powered plush creature that nibbles gently on your finger.

Aoki said young dogs or cats will harmlessly do the same thing, which is a source of comfort for people—noting that he likes to let the device nibble his finger while driving.

"In a COVID situation, with people staying home every day, it gives you

very good comfort," he added.

Who's driving?

Who will be behind the wheel of the [race cars](#) scheduled to hit the track at CES? No one.

"It's completely self-driven. There's software that tells the car what to do," said Paul Mitchell, president and CEO of Energy Systems Network, the organizers of the Indy Autonomous Challenge racing competition.

"It takes the information from the sensors and it tells the car whether to turn, whether to brake, accelerate or overtake another vehicle," he added.

Autonomous cars will race on Friday on the Las Vegas Motor Speedway at speeds of up to 160 miles (nearly 260 kilometers) per hour.

The exercise is not just for fun: Mitchell said the competition tests autonomous tech at [high speeds](#) so that, one day, cars can operate themselves on highways.

"Race cars and racing in general is a great platform to push the technology to the absolute edge," he added.



Franck Glaizal, co-founder of Airxom.

Mask for more than COVID

The white plastic shell of these [masks](#) covers the nose and mouth—and looks like something out of Star Wars.

But their inventors say they can stop pollution, bacteria and even COVID.

Connected to a belt-worn device, it contains an "active" filter capable of destroying fine particles and pathogens or pollutants.

"It's a fantastic tool to fight the COVID crisis," said Franck Glaizal, co-founder of Airxom.

"Traditional masks are not 100 percent airtight, air passes through the sides. Our mask is completely airtight", said Trong Dai Nguyen, an engineer with the company.

The current model is due to be released in a few months, for about \$340.

"If you change (surgical) masks every four hours, after three years it is more expensive than our mask," he added.

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