

Ford provides 50,000 face shields to assist Southern Africa

Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa (FMCSA) has assembled and supplied 50,000 face shields for the United States Department of Defense to shore up its response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the Southern African region.



Dhiren Vanmali and Lana Marks

Source: www.quickpic.co.za

This large order was facilitated by the US Embassy in Pretoria, and funded by the US AFRICOM Humanitarian Assistance programme. The face shields will be provided to the South African Military Health Service members who are on the frontlines battling the coronavirus across the country. They will also be supplied to Botswana, Namibia and the Kingdoms of Eswatini and Lesotho.

"The whole of the United States, from our government to individuals, the philanthropic sector, and US businesses are mobilizing support to fight Covid-19 globally and alongside South Africa," says US Ambassador to South Africa, Lana Marks. "Ford's local production of these face shields is a shining example of an American company pivoting its mission and adjusting its value-added to make an effective and generous contribution to fighting this pandemic in South Africa."

The face shields are being produced in a specially prepared and sanitized facility at Ford's Silverton Assembly Plant in Pretoria. All funds received are used to purchase the face shield materials, with Ford sponsoring all of the labour costs for

its employees involved in the assembly and packaging of the shields.

"The donation by Ford Motor Company underscores the immense value that this American company brings to the people of South Africa," adds US Embassy Economic Counsellor, Alan Tousignant. "This is in addition to the significant contributions it continues to make to the country's economic development and prized reputation as an attractive destination for foreign direct investment."

Combined with the 50,000 units supplied to the US Department of Defense, Ford has produced over 258,000 face shields to date. This includes almost 140,000 units that Ford has already donated directly to the Department of Health's centralised warehouse and distribution centre in Centurion, as well as direct donations to a variety of hospitals, clinics and humanitarian organisations.

"As an American company with a heart firmly in South Africa, we are exceptionally proud to be playing a key role in the national response to this Covid-19 pandemic through producing and supplying the face shields to help protect medical and essential services personnel," says Dhiren Vanmali, Ford's Executive Director of Government Affairs for Africa.

"As much as this crisis has had major economic and health implications for South Africa and the African continent as a whole, it has also seen extraordinary commitment from doctors, nurses and healthcare workers, along with numerous non-profit organisations, companies and individuals, stepping up and going further to support and assist the most vulnerable citizens."

The face shields project, which commenced at the beginning of April, has been led by Ockert Berry, VP Operations at FMCSA. "The order from the US Department of Defense, through the US Embassy, has provided a valuable additional boost to our efforts to address the critical shortage of personal protective equipment during this crisis," he says.

"All of our employees and suppliers involved in the project have demonstrated amazing dedication to the cause, even with the challenging restrictions imposed during the initial five-week lockdown," Berry states. "The confidence and support that the South African government, and now also the US government, has shown for our face shields project give all of us great personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement in having made a difference during these challenging times."

How can you help?

Donations to support the production and donation of face shields are welcomed from individuals and businesses. Any donations, big or small, will help protect our valued medical and essential services personnel and limit the spread of Covid-19 to those most at risk.

Ford has partnered with the Gift of the Givers Foundation, which has kindly provided the banking facility for all donations, which can be made as follows:

Account Name: Gift of the Givers

Institution: Standard Bank

Branch: Pietermaritzburg

Account number: 052137228

Branch Code: 057525

Deposit Reference: Ford

Any queries regarding making donations can be e-mailed to: socialme@ford.com, using the reference: Ford SA Covid-19.