

ANSWERING THE CALL FOR PANDEMIC PROTECTION



Dave Wickersham, CEO of NASTT-NE member Progressive Pipeline Management & PPM Site Services shares his thoughts on 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic from virus decontamination into pivoting to provide much needed USA-made PPE and COVID-19 testing for businesses and communities.

In late February 2020, I was in the New York-Presbyterian Hospital emergency room in New York City. My mother-in-law was in need of an ER visit. I brought her since my wife was in Walt Disney World about to run the Princess Half-Marathon.

The waiting room and lobby were overcrowded, with doctors everywhere and people coughing. CNN was on TV in the waiting room. We saw news stories about a virus in China and a few early cases in the USA. A young intern in NY Pres scrubs tapped me on the shoulder and pointed to the TV saying, “Keep your eye on this. It is going to get bad.”

I will never forget that moment. How right he was. In a few days, the world had changed. It was my 50th birthday.

I was involved in emergency hazardous material response before starting Progressive Pipeline Management (PPM.) My first job out of college was at the National Response Corporation (NRC) that provides national oil spill response with a dedicated network of owned and sub-contracted resources. We were quite busy in the mid-1990s post Exxon Valdez and I started to realize some of our largest oil spill clean ups were coming from pipelines. Learning about pipeline safety and integrity led me to URS, a large civil and environmental engineering company,

helping companies comply with pipeline regulations.

While working PCB decontamination for natural gas pipelines, I stumbled upon the Starline(r) cured-in-place-lining (CIPL) technology in Philadelphia. I was very intrigued by this technology and an opportunity arose, and I took it. CIPL is a proven, cost effective trenchless technology that extends the life of a pipeline by 100 years. PPM started in 2002, focused on renewing natural gas pipelines in challenging situations including highways, bridges, railroad lines and environmentally sensitive areas- serving our valued clients in public utilities and gas distribution.

Parallel to the pipeline renewal work, we continued offering environmental response and site services for natural disasters and remediation. We were there for hurricane responses, the avian bird flu in the Midwest, oil/chemical spills and cleaning AMTRAK tunnels and stations.

In early March 2020, we started getting calls requesting decontamination services for the coronavirus. We deployed crews to the US Capitol and other prominent buildings in DC, and major retailers such as Whole Foods and Costco. By the end of March we had contracts with our larger clients from Florida to Boston to clean and decontaminate buildings, vehicles,



David Wickersham, CEO, Progressive Pipeline Management & PPM Site Services

offices and warehouses. Rapidly deploying resources, we researched the best products and services for decontamination, as well as how to properly protect our Haz-Mat Strike Teams.



DECONTAMINATION SOLUTIONS

We went into a deep dive to learn about the virus and find the best and safest products to combat it. As first responders, protecting our workers against the virus and keeping them safe while on the job was number one. Our research and testing also focused on the best disinfectants and solutions to deploy to clean and disinfect our client sites for protection from the virus. The full range of cleaning options are on www.ppm-siteservices.com.

One fantastic disinfectant product is BioGlove. It was created by a Navy Seal in 2009 to combat SARS. It's an

anti-microbial spray, 95 percent water but alcohol-free, and triclosan-free. We weaponize BioGlove in an electrostatic sprayer that puts up to a 28-day barrier on a surface. It's not a sanitizer, nor a glove. All of our vans, all of our trucks, hotel rooms, office areas, bathrooms etc., are treated with BioGlove every three weeks. We've had zero infections originate from Progressive Pipeline Management or PPM Site Services work.

With BioGlove, customers don't need crews cleaning every day. It's a fantastic disinfectant, effective for ambulances and hotel rooms, retail and high trafficked surfaces. We've been using it in major NYC restaurants, schools, churches and with local law enforcement and EMT squads.

There is a personal BioGlove product as well, an anti-microbial spray that applies in a light, dry spray on the skin. Other sanitizers are alcohol-based, and tough on skin and surfaces. BioGlove is not. Every day I spray it on myself and on my mask. It lasts up to 12 hours per application. Spray once in the morning and you're done. It has been tested on over 300,000 people. It also protects against other viruses and bacteria including sars, e.coli, fungi, and streptococci.

THE CALL FOR PPE

With up to 400 employees and contractors cleaning in contaminated zones, or at the frontlines on pipeline projects, we had to develop our own aggressive PPE program. It was an overwhelming surge, but that is what happens in an emergency response. Research points to mask wearing as one of



After check-in, tests are performed by a medical professional

“PROTECTING OUR WORKERS AGAINST THE VIRUS AND KEEPING THEM SAFE WHILE ON THE JOB WAS NUMBER ONE.”



“Mobile Business Testing Available - Let us come to you!”

the best ways we're going to get through this.

Which mask is the best? Hands down, the Kimberly-Clark NIOSH-certified, USA-made N95 mask is the best mask on the market. It's an unknown secret. We heard in much of the media not to buy an N95 because they are needed for hospitals. This Kimberly-Clark N95 mask was designed for industrial and general purpose use, not for medical use. It is manufactured of the same medical grade and certification. If you wear one N95, that is all you need. It's what our employees use every day, and I am proud to say we have had zero infections for our workers in the field in New York, New Jersey, Philly and other hot spots.

A couple of our people were called out for symptoms. We quarantined them, tested them and they were negative. The couple of positives within the company have been traced back to family and other group gatherings.

We source and buy the products that we think are the best in class, because they

deserve to be protected. We worked a deal with the distributor and Kimberly-Clark for USA made N95 certified masks. I knew masks were going to be around for a long time, so we upped our quantities.



“DAVE, WILL YOU SELL US THESE?”

Customers on industrial sites and gas utilities started asking advice on PPE products we were using, and whether we could sell the product to them. We pivoted again and started First Call PPE www.firstcallppe.com to offer quality personal protective equipment with competitive pricing. First Call focuses on USA-made products that we use and own.

In addition to N95 Masks and BioGlove, the next piece to the pandemic puzzle



“Drive-Thru model gives patients a convenient, fast, and safe testing experience”

to protect our workers and their families was COVID-19 testing. We learned the difference between PCR, Antigen and Antibody testing. We started Rapid Antibody testing backed up by a molecular PCR test by partnering with several of the best National Labs.

Critical issues about testing are distinguishing the type of tests, how to use the tests and understanding the accuracy. There are different tests and test kits from all over the world. The only test kits we use have been authorized by the FDA under the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). That path led us to seeing another gap in

the market for testing, both for businesses and public test sites.

TESTHERE.COM

In our quest for test kits and best practices, I was introduced to Dennis Guadenzi, who owned and operated a successful event planning and marketing business. As his industry is one of the most severely hit during this pandemic, he looked to pivot and help provide PPE solutions in a principled way. We launched **TestHere.com** on Dec 1, 2020 and set up a web based model for safe, convenient

and efficient drive-through test sites. We were looking at the safety of employees during testing, and had seen companies where they’ve had several hundred people standing in line. The six-foot spread goes away, and people are standing for a long time. Testing was becoming a spreading event.

Dennis and I felt we each uniquely had a skill set that complimented the other and that we could provide a better testing option than what we had seen. With RVs and our drive-thru model, we’ve tested over 15,000 people since December with our sites in New Jersey and Virginia. We are adding more sites in these states as well as Dallas, Houston and New Orleans in March.

Our testing process is fully compliant and transparent following reporting requirements for positive and negative outcomes through State requirements. Any testing for COVID-19, has to be reported to the CDC and state according to specific guidelines. We formed relationships with national and local labs and best-in-class testers. First Call has obtained all required CLIA laboratory licensing and works directly with each state we operate in.

Businesses and our customers have turned to us for help navigating the complexities of testing and for counsel about the frequency, strategy and management. We can set up testing sites for companies or organizations in



Safe convenient and effective drive-thru testing sites are set up in parking lot

“I AM PROUD TO SAY WE HAVE HAD ZERO INFECTIONS FOR OUR WORKERS IN THE FIELD IN NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, PHILLY AND OTHER HOT SPOTS.”

Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Louisiana, and Texas. The drive-through model is set up in a parking lot and we schedule out in fifteen minute increments. Employees do not leave their car and are not standing in line potentially spreading the virus. We are doing testing programs for various small, medium and large sized businesses.

We offer multiple tests. With the rapid antigen testing, a patient knows if they are positive or negative within 10 minutes. It's great for community testing. PCR tests are often called the “gold-standard” of tests, and rightly so. Molecular diagnostic tests, like PCRs, test the sample to check for virus in the genetic material and must be run at a laboratory. The PCR is the typical requirement for international travel, college campuses, and medical procedures. Our PCR test has quick turnaround time for results, with same or next day options. This is different from the four day PCR test offered at larger retail chain test sites. Antibody testing is also available, with results in 15 minutes.

GIVING BACK

For those who cannot afford it, we have made a number of donations, well over half a million dollars in give-backs in donated masks, wipes, BioGlove and testing. Our crews have also been out doing cleaning and decontamination for churches, schools, EMT, police stations and fire houses at no cost.

In our Atlantic Highlands, NJ test center, EMTs and first responders get tested for free. We've issued free tests, and there are multiple stories of our team out testing on holidays and in homeless shelters. We've done cleaning programs in New York City with Guardian Angels and the founder Curtis Sliwa. And we are currently working with the Baltimore

Guardian Angels and their Commander, Marcus “Stryder” Dent in putting together a pro-bono COVID-19 testing weekend with free PPE, testing and an educational outreach to some of the areas that don't

have access. The local community, city and elected officials work closely with us. Marcus, one of our Haz Mat Strike Team Managers, has been on the front lines of our response efforts.



Medical staff practice safety protocol to ensure each test is processed accurately



Storefront test center, Atlantic Highlands NJ. EMTs and First Responders are tested for free

“OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE TURNED TO US FOR HELP NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF TESTING.”



Beating the virus is 100 percent about good and safe work practices.”

“WHEN’S IT GOING TO END?”

I don’t think coronavirus is going to end, in the proverbial sense, but will

remain with us as the virus mutates into new strains and variants. Beating the virus is absolutely possible, in my opinion, but will be 100 percent about managing it with good and safe working practices. Based on our real world success on stopping the spread and zero infection rates, our corporate COVID-19 safety protocols will remain in effect regardless of the political pandemic football game being played. We will carry-on with USA Made PPE, COVID-19 Testing and aggressive Sanitization practices like BIOGLOVE, as we have for the past year.

In closing, I’d also like to single out all of our employees who have embraced and remain compliant with our internal procedures. The men and women at our collective companies, First Responders

all, have performed so well during such a difficult year. **I could not be more proud of each and every one of you!**
#ppmstrong #whosyourFIRSTCALL †

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



David Wickersham,
Owner and President, formed PPM Site Services in August 2002, at the same time as Progressive Pipeline Management.

First Call PPE was founded this May 2020 to respond to needs arising from the Covid-19 Pandemic. Dave is a Graduate of U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point and Veteran of Gulf War One Operation Desert Storm.





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FIRSTCALL PPE



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Let our team bring safety and peace of mind to your team! Always available **USA Made** products include Industrial-Grade NIOSH N95 masks, Surface Disinfectant, Hand Sanitizers, Wipes and more. Quality site cleanup and decontamination services are ready to deploy. Our on-site COVID-19 testing teams are equipped to serve your business needs quickly and conveniently.

WE CAN COME TO YOU!



FOR MORE INFORMATION or TO PLACE AN ORDER VISIT US ONLINE AT: www.FIRSTCALLPPE.com