



INDUSTRIAL HEATING EQUIPMENT ASSOCIATION

IHEA member Alabama Power (Southern Company) provides support during pandemic



Alabama Power's Technology Applications Center uses lasers to cut the acrylic for face shields.



A print shop laser cuts face shields. About 100 a day can be produced this way.



Assembled face shields. The one on the right is 3D printed.

The team at Alabama Power’s Technology Applications Center (TAC) recently turned their focus from keeping the lights on to helping save lives. Through a partnership with the Alabama Productivity Center at The University of Alabama and UAB’s School of Engineering, they are meeting the needs of local medical workers.

Ordinarily, Alabama Power’s TAC facility serves as a demonstration and test facility that investigates ways to reduce production costs, improve energy efficiency and productivity while addressing environmental concerns. Lately, their attention on this new project means a different type of service for their customers.



Acrylic headbands.

“I look at it from our group’s perspective; we are helping our customers,” said Scott Bishop, team lead at Alabama Power and IHEA’s current president. “In this case, our customer is the hospital’s staff. We are still helping our customers, just in a different way.”

Medical personnel across the country are in dire need of personal protective equipment (PPE) to continue the fight against COVID-19. While traditional supply chains are struggling to keep up, technology is helping fill the gaps for PPE.

When Bishop got word that 3D printers were needed to make

headbands for face shields for medical staff at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, he rallied a small crew within his company to produce the needed equipment.

In addition to 3D printing headbands, the project evolved into making full face shields when Bishop realized they could use the TAC’s laser cutting capabilities to cut acrylic for the face shields that would last longer, producing approximately 100 per day. Knowing that the most contaminated part of the body is the face, the shields play an essential role in keeping healthcare workers safe when dealing with infectious diseases. Using the laser-cut acrylic face shields will go a long way during the COVID-19 crisis.

Countless people have stepped up in support of their communities and the nation during this unprecedented emergency, and IHEA is proud to recognize the team at Alabama Power and their partners for making a difference. Using their internal network to support an idea created hope for so many.

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