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Shawmut Design and Construction rolls out COVID-19 safety technology

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Les Hiscoe

Boston, MA Shawmut Design and Construction has developed a robust COVID-19 safety plan, created in partnership with trade unions, industry peer groups, and other leading firms. The firm has rolled out safety protocols, new job-site innovation, and an exhaustive COVID-19 risk assessment and response plan to all project sites across the country, ensuring the safety of all employees and team members.

Known for its world-class safety program, Shawmut developed a new custom technology platform designed to check for COVID-19 symptoms and manage contact tracing to minimize and control infectious disease spread. Through grassroots innovation, forward-thinking Shawmut team members created the Shawmut Vitals platform, which allows employees and subcontractors to self-certify daily health screenings by scanning a job-specific QR code, then filling out a health survey. If an individual is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or has been exposed to someone who is either infected or at-risk, the individual is flagged for further care and action, enabling Shawmut to continue to deliver its people-first approach to construction projects. This software solution, built entirely in-house, is easily integrated into existing Shawmut systems, allowing team members to access information on their mobile devices at a much faster rate.

The firm has also mobilized new platforms designed to monitor for safety compliance, enforce appropriate on-site social distancing, and screen personnel for fevers. Having rolled out SmartVid.io across all projects over a year ago, Shawmut is also maximizing the use of the technology's new capability to detect if people on job sites are not properly social distancing. Smartvid.io uses a combination of cameras and various deep learning approaches for computer vision, an area of artificial intelligence where machines are trained to analyze images. Similarly, Shawmut has implemented the use of Feevr, a device that screens for elevated temperatures. Created in response to the pandemic, Feevr enables the user to identify individuals with an elevated body temperature without making direct contact, thereby minimizing the risk of infectious disease cross contamination. Shawmut will also pilot the use of a wearable device that buzzes and alerts the Shawmut team members if workers are within six feet of one another.

“The Coronavirus has very quickly required a drastic change to the world, and specifically, to our

construction industry,” said Les Hiscoe, CEO of Shawmut. “Through technology partnerships, pilot programs, and grassroots innovation by our project team members in the field, we have created efficient, enhanced safety guidelines. Protecting our employees and everyone on our jobsites is our top priority, so we are engaging in real-time, adapting to our new environment’s requirements almost instantly, and never missing a beat.”

In addition to the use of safety technology, the Shawmut COVID-19 response plan outlines stringent guidelines for self-awareness and reporting; social distancing; hygiene protocol; disinfecting equipment and high-contact areas; the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE); site safety requirements; on-site communication; and emergency procedures. A dedicated COVID-19 officer will be on site 100% of the time to enforce all site safety protocol. To maximize social distancing, gatherings of more than five people will not be allowed, with only essential personnel permitted on each site. Where necessary, crews may be minimized and shifts staggered. Safety orientations, daily pre-task planning meetings, toolbox talks, and foreman’s meetings will take place in open air, with appropriate social distancing in place. Health screening guidelines, self-reporting, and all best practices will be reviewed regularly and reinforced with on-site signage, written in English and Spanish and located in high-traffic areas. Shawmut will also ensure that an adequate amount of hand-washing stations will be available throughout all sites, with each unit at least six feet apart. For tasks that require more than one person for completion, additional PPE will be required. In the event of possible COVID-19 exposure, Shawmut teams will strictly follow CDC regulations, outlined in a risk assessment and decision-making flow chart that provides concrete steps and actions for on-site workers and teams.

As an innovator in the category, Shawmut continues to drive a culture of safety throughout the industry. During this unprecedented time, the firm has been well positioned to quickly react and adapt to changing safety requirements and needs, incorporating guidelines from the CDC as well as requirements mandated by the state of Massachusetts, among the strictest in the nation. Shawmut ensures that the well-being of its workforce remains its number one priority.

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