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Israeli company showcases new sanitization technology at Atlantic City International Airport

Selena Vazquez For The Press

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP — It was like a scene from a sci-fi movie Wednesday morning at Atlantic City International Airport, as ultraviolet disinfecting lights shot out of domes and artificial intelligence systems read a volunteer's vitals without ever touching them.

However, the things being shown aren't so far off into the future, as newly developed sanitization and disease detection technologies will make their way into airports and public places for the first time in the United States within the next few months.

Israel Aerospace Industries North America, a U.S. subsidiary of Israel's largest aerospace and defense company, revealed two pieces of technology — Tamar and Grenada — that could be used to help detect and prevent the spread of diseases.

Grenada uses ultraviolet light to disinfect surfaces, and Tamar uses a physiological monitoring system to measure a person's heart rate, respiratory rate and body temperature from a safe distance of at least 6 feet, another room or even another country, according to IAI officials.

About 30 people watched Wednesday's demonstration at the airport, a designated Smart Airport Testbed where aviation-related research and development is encouraged. Attendees included Lauren H. Moore Jr., president of the Atlantic County Economic Alliance; Felicity Kay, global marketing and sales manager for Eltel; Shelley Yak, director of the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center; and U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd.

"This pandemic has exposed the world's vulnerability to infectious disease. We must adapt our infrastructure so that when the next pandemic comes, we are not so vulnerable," said Van Drew. "The technologies being demonstrated here today are just a singular example of the wider adaptations we need to strengthen our infrastructure against the existential threat of disease."

Although the exact prices for Tamar and Grenada were not given at the demonstration, IAI representatives said they would be affordable.

The Tamar looks almost like a health care professional's heart monitoring system, just more complex. The Grenada looks like a little gray, portable dome with holes all over it. The holes hold the disinfectant lights.

The Grenada and Tamar units have been implemented in emergency rooms and hospitals throughout the United Kingdom and Middle East, said Kay, whose company is a Nordic communications network provider. She said both the Tamar and Grenada units should be available to businesses in as little as a few months.

"We weren't ready for this pandemic. COVID isn't going anywhere," said Kay, who did the demonstration for the Tamar unit at the airport. "This is the first time we can help people in the pandemic. And it's an honor for us to be a part of this."

IAI focuses on creating technology for space, air, land, naval, cyber and homeland security. The technology behind Tamar and Grenada was created by repurposing military technology for civilian use.

“This type of technology doesn’t exist anywhere in the world,” said Ilan Bublil, regional director of marketing and sales for IAI. “In a matter of six months, we took our defense technology and created it into civilian technology. This technology is mainly about distancing and measuring from a distance to keep people safe.”