# General Motors’ first ventilators are ready for delivery

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- Workers build the first production ventilators at the General Motors manufacturing facility in Kokomo, Indiana on Monday, April 13, 2020.
- GM says the first 600 ventilators will be delivered by month’s end, with more than 15,000 by the end of June.
- The ventilators are licensed from Ventec Life Systems and are meant for use with the most critically ill patients.
- Ford will start producing an all-new PAPR design to help protect health care professionals on the front lines fighting COVID-19.

On Tuesday, General Motors revealed that its first ventilators are ready for delivery. The automaker has a contract with the US Department of Health and Human Services to license-build 30,000 Ventec Life Systems V+ Pro critical care ventilators, following criticism by President Donald Trump in March when he accused the company of “wasting time.” These ventilators are designed to treat the most critically ill patients, who need invasive intubation (tubes inserted into the lungs) as opposed to non-invasive machines like CPAP or BiPAP devices, which are

also often referred to as ventilators.

GM says that it will ship the first 600 ventilators by the end of April, with “almost half the order” ready by the end of June and the full 30,000 by the end of August. The company has the capacity to produce more if needed. The automaker has leveraged its logistics chain and worked with suppliers to source parts and assemblies, and it has worked closely with Ventec to make these urgently needed medical devices.

“Thousands of men and women at GM, Ventec, our suppliers and the Kokomo community have rallied to support their neighbors and the medical professionals on the front lines of this pandemic,” said GM Chairwoman and CEO Mary Barra. “Everyone wants to help turn the tide and save lives. It is inspiring and humbling to see the passion and commitment people have put into this work.”

“This partnership is an historic effort and a great reminder of what can be accomplished with the power of American innovation and American manufacturing skill uniting together around a singular mission to save lives,” said Ventec Life Systems CEO Chris Kiple.

## Other automakers respond to the COVID-19 crisis

GM is not the only US automaker to switch gears into medical device production. On Monday, Ford announced that this week it will begin production of powered air-purifying respirators (PAPRs) for medical workers. Ford has worked with 3M on the PAPRs, although the devices have yet to receive approval from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which Ford says should happen by the end of April. Ford has also been producing face masks and gowns.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk has also said that the company’s shuttered

solar panel factory in Buffalo, New York, will be repurposed to produce ventilators “as soon as humanly possible,” although New York officials have since clarified that once the Buffalo factory does begin operations again, it would only be making a single component, not complete ventilator devices.

As time is definitely of the essence in the rush to equip hospitals to fight the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation announced on Tuesday that it has published emergency guidance documents for the rapid development of safe and effective ventilators and resuscitators for use by companies that do not ordinarily produce (highly regulated) medical devices.

AAMI’s Dr. Julian Goldman, cochair of AAMI’s COVID-19 response team, notes, “While they have talented engineers, many do not have the foundational knowledge in this area, particularly when it comes to patient safety. Once you show them that there are standards that exist, that can really help them rapidly understand what should be considered for safety, it makes the engineers’ lives much easier and speeds product development. They don’t have to ask for the same information over and over again”.

*Listing image by AJ Mast for General Motors*

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