Ford to Produce 50,000 Ventilators in Michigan in Next 100 Days; Partnering with GE Healthcare Will Help Coronavirus Patients

- Ford, in collaboration with GE Healthcare, will leverage the design of Airon Corp.’s FDA-cleared ventilator to produce in Michigan
- With the full weight of the UAW behind the venture and the full power of Ford and GE Healthcare, production of the GE/Airon Model A-E ventilator is targeted to start the week of April 20 at Ford’s Rawsonville (Mich.) Components Plant
- Ford expects to produce 50,000 of the ventilators within the next 100 days, with the ability to produce 30,000 a month thereafter as needed
- The simplified ventilator design – licensed by GE Healthcare from Florida-based Airon Corp. – is responsive to the needs of most COVID-19 patients, and operates on air pressure without the need for electricity
- This unique, go-fast initiative comes in addition to the previously announced program by Ford and GE Healthcare to increase production capacity of existing GE Healthcare ventilators

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DEARBORN, Mich., March 30, 2020 – Ford Motor Company, in collaboration with GE Healthcare, announced today it will begin producing in Michigan a third-party ventilator with the goal to produce 50,000 of the vitally needed units within 100 days and up to 30,000 a month thereafter as needed.

Ford will provide its manufacturing capabilities to quickly scale production, and GE Healthcare will provide its clinical expertise and will license the current ventilator design from Airon Corp. – a small, privately held company specializing in high-tech pneumatic life support products. GE Healthcare brought the Airon Corp. design to Ford’s attention as part of the companies’ efforts to scale production of ventilators quickly to help clinicians treat COVID-19 patients.

The GE/Airon Model A-E ventilator uses a design that operates on air pressure without the need for electricity, addressing the needs of most COVID-19 patients. Its production can be quickly scaled to help meet growing demand in the U.S.

“The Ford and GE Healthcare teams, working creatively and tirelessly, have found a way to produce this vitally needed ventilator quickly and in meaningful numbers,” said Jim Hackett, Ford’s president and CEO. “By producing this ventilator in Michigan, in strong partnership with the UAW, we can help health care workers save lives, and that’s our No. 1 priority.”

According to White House Defense Production Act Coordinator Peter Navarro, “the Ford/GE Healthcare team is moving in ‘Trump time’ to speed urgently needed ventilators to the front lines of the Trump Administration’s full-scale war against the coronavirus. Just as Ford in the last century moved its manufacturing might seamlessly from auto to tank production during World War II, the Ford team is working with GE Healthcare to use its awesome engineering and manufacturing capabilities to voluntarily help this nation solve one of its most pressing problems. We salute that effort and look forward to the first ventilators rolling off the Michigan assembly line in record time – and we’ll be there to salute that milestone.”

Ford will initially send a team to work with Airon to boost production in Florida, and by the week of April 20, will start production at Ford’s Rawsonville Components Plant in Ypsilanti, Mich., quickly ramping up to reach full production to help meet surging demand.
Ford expects to produce 1,500 by the end of April, 12,000 by the end of May and 50,000 by July 4 – helping the U.S. government meet its goal of producing 100,000 ventilators in 100 days.

Ford’s Rawsonville plant will produce the ventilators nearly around the clock, with 500 paid volunteer UAW-represented employees working on three shifts. Airon currently produces three Airon pNeuton Model A ventilators per day in Melbourne, Fla. At full production, Ford plans to make 7,200 Airon-licensed Model A-E ventilators per week.

“From the days of Rosie the Riveter, UAW members have stepped up during difficult times in this nation’s history for the good of us all,” said UAW International President Rory Gamble. “Today’s announcement by Ford that UAW employees will make ventilators at Rawsonville is in that tradition. We are working very closely with Ford to make sure that all CDC guidelines are followed and that we are exercising an abundance of caution inside the plant. Ford and our UAW Ford members should be commended for stepping up in these very uncertain times.”

The Airon-licensed Model A-E ventilator is the second Ford-GE Healthcare ventilator collaboration. Last week, Ford and GE Healthcare announced a separate effort to produce a simplified ventilator design from GE Healthcare. The combined ventilator supply will help address the increasing surge demand for ventilators around the U.S. in the fight against COVID-19, each well suited to meet time, production volume and patient care requirements.

“We applaud Ford for its efforts to lend its manufacturing capabilities to help quickly scale the Airon-licensed Model A-E ventilator and arm clinicians in the fight against COVID-19,” said GE Healthcare President and CEO Kieran Murphy. “Our deep understanding of the health care industry with Ford’s supply chain and production expertise will help meet the unprecedented demand for medical equipment. We continue to be encouraged by how quickly companies are coming together in innovative ways to address this collective challenge.”

GE Healthcare and Ford consulted with medical experts in determining the Airon-licensed Model A-E ventilator is well suited for COVID-19 patient care. The design is expected to meet the needs of most COVID-19 patients with respiratory failure or difficulty breathing. The ventilator is designed for quick setup, making it easy for healthcare workers to use – and can be deployed in an emergency room setting, during special procedures or in an intensive care unit, wherever the patient may be located.

Ford, along with the companies it is supporting, will provide additional updates as these special projects progress.

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