

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Inmates working with MPIC play key role in fight against COVID-19

JACKSON – Inmates working for a non-profit organization are now playing a key role in helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The inmates are making masks and gowns through Mississippi Prison Industries Corp. (MPIC), which gives incarcerated individuals work experience designed to be beneficial before and after their release.

MPIC has partnered with Blue Delta Jeans Co. to produce masks and is working with the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to make gowns.

“To date we are currently producing somewhere in the neighborhood of 12 to 15,000 masks a day at our South Mississippi Correctional (Institution) garment factory,” Bradley Lum, MPIC’s CEO, said during a press briefing with Gov. Tate Reeves highlighting local businesses helping in the fight against COVID-19. “Our Parchman facility is producing somewhere in the neighborhood of 5 to 7,000 isolation gowns a day for the state. Frankly, the need is only growing so we’re committed to doing that as long as we have to. We’re fortunate that we are able to retool our facilities and get that moving in the right direction.”

Lum said the inmates are taking pride in their work. “It speaks well of the guys who are in the facilities and are working that they want to be a part of helping our state in this recovery effort.”

The Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) is ensuring the necessary workforce is ready and available for the work.

Interim MDOC Commissioner Tommy Taylor is among those who suggested to Lum that MPIC consider making personal protective equipment (PPE) to help address the shortage in the medical industry in responding to COVID-19. MPIC has MDOC’s full support of this project as well as others, Taylor said.

“Not only are these inmates contributing to their own protection and that of other inmates—as we are purchasing some of the masks for our inmate population—they are contributing to the protection of Mississippians across our state,” Taylor said. “Thanks to this partnership, we are

able to provide inmates an opportunity to gain skills they can carry with them throughout life while helping in the fight against COVID-19 to care for all in Mississippi.”

Lum said he is fortunate to work with Blue Delta Jeans’ CEO, Josh West, and supports the company’s efforts in the fight against COVID-19.

“Given the front end work that Josh and his team had already completed, we felt it was a perfect fit to join in their efforts. Our goal is always to partner with Mississippi small businesses in a support role, and this gives us another opportunity to do that,” Lum said.

“In times like these, public-private partnerships are critical to meet the needs of the people working on the front lines to help keep us safe,” West said.