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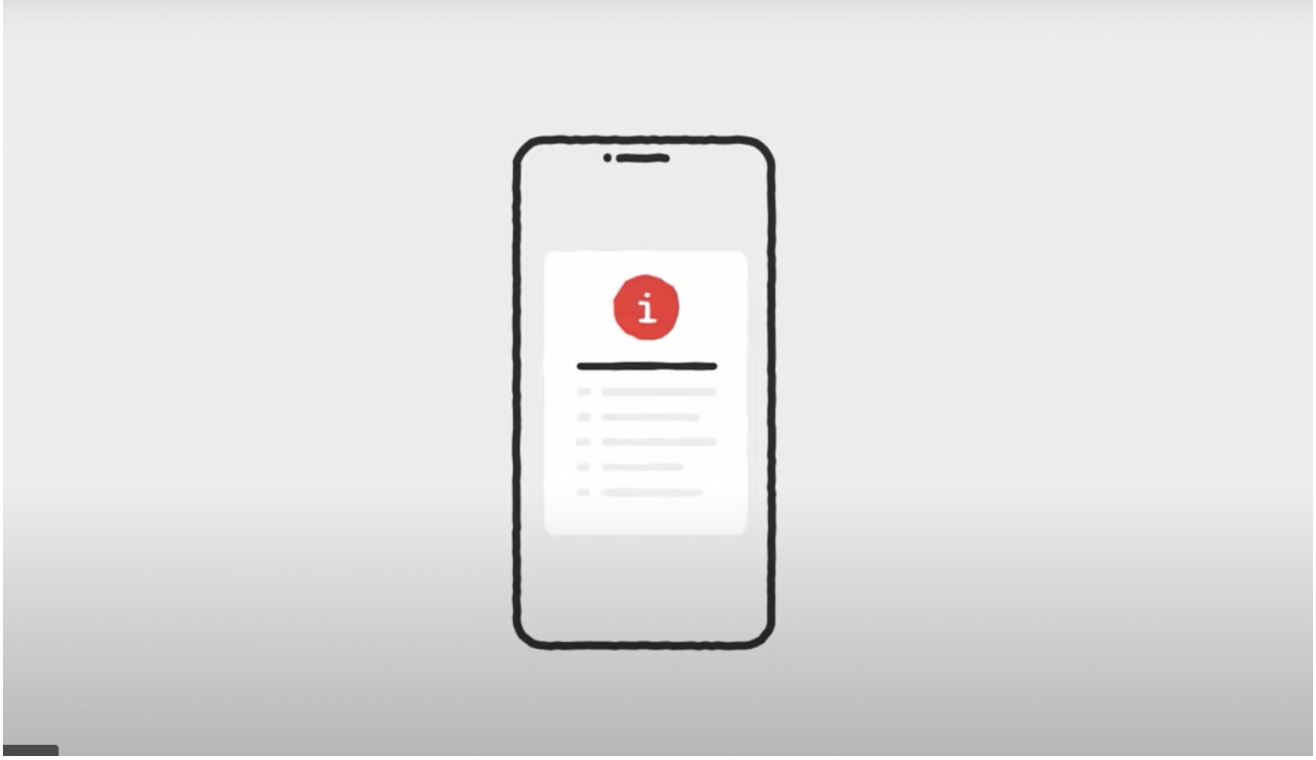
Google/Apple Exposure Notification Express Launches in Utah

February 16, 2021



The state of Utah will launch the Google/Apple Exposure Notification Express system to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Starting tomorrow, Wednesday, February 17, 2021, Utahns can opt in to receive and share notifications about possible COVID-19 exposures. Smartphone users will receive three alerts over the next week encouraging them to turn on the notification system.

“Contact tracing is an important part of how public health responds and stops disease outbreaks. People who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 are more at risk of getting infected and making others sick,” said Navina Forsythe, director of

the Utah Department of Health Center for Health Data and Informatics. “Exposure Notifications is a form of electronic contact tracing that uses encrypted or anonymous tokens exchanged through your phone and the phones of those around you to keep an encrypted log of who you’ve been in contact with. The service doesn’t track the location of the smartphone user and instead relies on anonymized interactions through Bluetooth technology.”

When two people have activated Exposure Notifications on their smartphones and come in close proximity to one another, they exchange anonymized “tokens” that log that close interaction for 14 days. A verification code is sent to individuals who test positive for COVID-19 by the Utah Department of Health. That code can then be entered into the Exposure Notification system by the individual who tests positive to alert others who came into close contact with them that they were possibly exposed to COVID-19. Anyone who was possibly exposed will be asked to watch for symptoms of COVID-19 and get tested. Users of Exposure Notification never know the identities of the person who tested positive or who was notified about a possible exposure.

“The success of Exposure Notification is dependent on how many people opt in to the service,” said Forsythe. “Modeling has produced estimates that if just 15% of a population uses Exposure Notifications, that in combination with manual contact tracing, there can be up to a 15% reduction in COVID-19 infections and 11% fewer deaths. A higher percentage of participation can lead to even greater reductions in disease.”

To learn more about Exposure Notifications Express, visit https://coronavirus.utah.gov/exposure-notifications/ (https://web.archive.org/web/20220120055646/https://coronavirus.utah.gov/exposure-notifications/).

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