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COVID-19 Exposure Notification Mobile App Now Available in Minnesota

Minnesota joins more than 20 states and territories using secure, anonymous technology to help slow the spread of COVID-19

November 23, 2020

[ST. PAUL, MN] – Governor Tim Walz today announced the availability of a new COVID-19 exposure notification mobile application, COVIDaware MN, which could slow the spread of COVID-19 by helping Minnesotans protect themselves and their loved ones. The voluntary, anonymous application will alert a user if another user with whom they have had close contact during the virus' infectious period tests positive for COVID-19.

" **As we see a dangerous surge in cases across the state, we need to use every tool possible to cut off the spread of the virus,"** said Governor Walz. " **COVIDaware MN gives our state a powerful and anonymous new tool to alert others we've had close contact with – even people we don't know – and slow the spread of COVID-19** ."

"Knowing when we've been exposed to COVID-19 is a critical part of curbing the spread of COVID-19, especially as cases surge," said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. **"This app will help Minnesotans keep themselves and their families safe. I encourage all Minnesotans to opt in and spread the word about this free, voluntary, and anonymous app."**

" **This innovative technology protects the privacy of Minnesotans and collects no data about a user** ," said Minnesota's CIO and Commissioner of Minnesota IT Services, Tarek Tomes. **"If Minnesotans opt in and follow health recommendations when notified of an exposure, we will slow the spread of COVID-19 and be one step closer to returning to many of the activities we miss so much** ."

When Minnesotans download the app and allow notifications, COVIDaware MN generates a random, privacy-protecting key for a user's phone. The app does not track individuals' locations or their positions relative to one another. Using Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) technology, the user's phone and the phones of other users they are near anonymously exchange these privacy-protected keys. If a person receives a positive test, the Department of Health will provide a unique code the person may enter into the app, if they choose. If they enter the code, users with whom they've been within six feet for 15 or more minutes over a 24 hour period in the past 14 days will receive a notification of an exposure. COVIDaware MN will exchange random keys with anyone who downloads COVIDaware MN or similar applications developed by other states that use the same technology framework.

" **The COVIDaware MN app will supplement Minnesota's contact tracing efforts, which typically rely on a person to remember who they may have been in contact with or places they have visited while they were sick. With COVIDaware MN, Minnesotans can learn of an exposure to COVID-19 even when the exposure involves people they don't know** ," said Jan Malcolm, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Health.

COVIDaware MN uses a COVID-19 exposure notification technology developed by Apple and Google. More than 20 states and territories have launched apps based on Google and Apple's exposure notification technology, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Guam, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wyoming. More states are expected to adopt this technology as part of their COVID-19 response efforts.

When Minnesotans download and use COVIDaware MN, they are helping others in the community make informed decisions about their health and are playing their part to slow the spread of the virus. The more individuals who download the app, the more effective the tool will be to notify Minnesotans about potential exposures. Minnesotans can learn more about the app on the COVIDaware MN website (https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcovidawaremn.com%2F&data=04%7C01%7CHolland.Griffin%40state.mn.us%7C75924b8190b0478a3b4108d88fc58e5a%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26l , and download it today from the Google Play or App Store.

The app was built with open-source software from PathCheck Foundation, a nonprofit founded at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, dedicated to containing COVID-19, revitalizing the economy, and protecting individual privacy and liberty. PathCheck's digital pandemic response software is being used by multiple states, territories, and countries.

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