

New program to give out free masks, other supplies in Bristol, Virginia

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BRISTOL, Va. — The city of Bristol, Virginia will distribute free public health resources through a program with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

The city has been allocated 3,000 masks and 3,000 bottles of hand sanitizer through the Health Equity Pilot Program, according to a news release.

The Bristol Virginia Fire Department will work with the **Bristol Redevelopment and Housing Authority** and representatives from local faith-based organizations to handle distribution. These supplies will also be available for pickup outside all three city fire stations from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., starting today. Fire stations are located at 211 Lee St., 1603 Euclid Ave. and 105 Suncrest Drive.

“VDEM is proud to partner with the city of Bristol to equitably distribute lifesaving resources to communities historically disproportionately impacted by disasters, including under-resourced communities and communities of color,” said Curtis Brown, VDEM

state coordinator. “Equity centered programs, like the Health Equity Pilot Program, are important during this critical time in our COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.”

The program is a state-local partnership designed to increase access to personal protective equipment and public health information in underserved and historically disadvantaged communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, according to the statement.

More than 70 Virginia localities have been identified for participation in the program and will receive up to 20,000 cloth masks, bottles of hand sanitizer and appropriate translated public health materials. To date, the commonwealth has partnered with more than 60 localities, according to the statement.

City officials in over 30 localities have completed health equity and public safety training and begun distributing much-needed resources within their communities, while the others are in the planning phase of the pilot program and set to begin distribution in the upcoming weeks, the release states.

The communities were identified using indicators including chronic diseases, household income, age, disability status and other health factors. Over 700,000 cloth masks and over 580,000 bottles of hand sanitizer have been delivered to localities across the state.