

Transforming HII: Response to COVID-19

Voice of Mike Petters, President and CEO, Huntington Ingalls Industries on COVID-19 Response and Transformation:

Whether the pandemic was a catalyst or not, I think some of the changes in the way that we're thinking about the problem we have, have basically energized the organization to take advantage of tools that we had been working on.

Dru Branche, director, Environmental, Health, Safety and Security, Newport News

Shipbuilding: I mean there's so much that we did during this COVID response that if you had asked anybody could you do this, all you would have gotten was a bunch of no's. All right? And, the real question is: What would it take to say yes? What do you have to have? And, so why do I have to have a pandemic to get people working from home, using WebEx, doing all kinds of things differently? Why can't I do that on a regular day?

Dr. Charles McRaney, Chief Medical Officer, Ingalls Shipbuilding: It was a two-pronged attack: So first get people to stay home if they're sick; second, if the person showed up sick, then we were going to have screening centers in place. We've had to become our own epidemiologists and track and trace each case.

Dru Branche: Relationships was the name of the game during COVID response, and that didn't matter if you were talking within the division or whether you were talking about just internal to EH&S. You know, our people that didn't necessarily work together so much got thrown together very quickly.

Dr. Charles McRaney: Facilities provided the portable buildings for screening. They're the ones that set it up for us, got the facilities in place for us. IT was there from the very beginning because they were having to set up people working from home.

Dru Branche: Access control became a key player in the COVID response. Which seems unlikely but that's how we were governing the quarantine process, right? They became integral to understanding how many people were in the plant because they had badge records. And, you know, we were working with facilities. We were working with sourcing as we were trying to come up to speed on face cloths, masks, supplies that might be needed and hand sanitizer.

Dr. Charles McRaney: Supply chain was a huge part of it because we had to get temperature guns, we had to get equipment, and we had to get contracts for people to do the temperature training. Also the finance department, which has been a major player, specifically payroll. Payroll has to pay every employee we put out. Every employee that gets sick pay. But we had to come up with new processes, new processes to make sure if somebody got placed out, that the leave desk knows about it; medical forwards up a pay slip to payroll to the leave desk so the individual gets their pay.

Dru Branche: You know, it was ultimately somebody out of the pass office who mentioned to us that a local distillery was making hand sanitizer when we couldn't get it anyplace else.

Dr. Charles McRaney: We reached out to Singing River Hospital, our local hospital system. They agreed to partner with us. Singing River supplies the nursing, the kits, they do the collection, and they run the tests and do the follow-up. It was a company-wide effort and the effort was to keep our people safe and keep this company rolling.

Dru Branche: You know, so much of what we do is regulatory driven. So there's a limited amount of latitude to what you can do. But I think "what" we are doing differently, is more "how" we're doing it. I think we've learned a new tempo, so I think there's the "how" more so than the "what," is what we've seen the opportunity to change.