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Tech-developed decontamination cloth reaches market - may help Japan decontamination

March 20

It's not available in any stores, but Fibertect - a cotton-carbon decontamination cloth developed at Texas Tech - is finally on the market.

IFAI member First Line Technology, a Chantilly, Va.-based manufacturer of disaster preparedness equipment and supplies for first responders and the military, is now marketing the product in several forms, said Amit Kapoor, the company's founder and president.

It's available as preshaped mitts for personal wipedowns if someone is exposed to toxins or chemicals, individual wipe cloths and pads, and in rolls perforated to produce 12-inch by 12-inch sheets, like paper towels in a kitchen.

The company sells the product through a network of distributors.

It also comes in a biodegradable raw cotton outer layer over its activated carbon layer for cleaning up oil spills and trapping the vapors that often make cleanup crews ill.

"It's working out to be a great success," said Kapoor of the product, developed at The Institute of Environmental and Human Health using research by Sheshadri Ramkumar, a Tech associate professor (and IFAI member) who works with developing nonwoven materials as countermeasures to biological and chemical weapons.

Kapoor said the fabric is undergoing additional reviews, including consideration by the National Guard for nationwide deployment.

More recently, uses are being considered for Fibertect to help with some aspects of the cleanup in Japan following the recent earthquake, typhoon and radiation leaks at a nuclear power plant there, Kapoor added.

"Disasters are our business," Kapoor said of First Line Technology. In addition to Fibertect, the company manufactures personal cooling vests, hats and wraps for humans and animals; disaster preparedness and response equipment, including AmbuBus, which can convert a normal mass transit bus into a vehicle for carrying patients on stretchers; and personal protection clothing and boots.

Last year's British Petroleum oil spill gave Ramkumar, known around Lubbock as "Dr. Ram," a chance to use Fibertect in a very different field setting, and it worked extremely well both in collecting oil washing up on the beaches and trapping most of the noxious vapors coming off the oil.

As a result, the U.S. Coast Guard is giving Fibertect's oil product a long look for the



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future.

"We pride ourselves on trying to use U.S. companies and to keep the money in the U.S.," Kapoor said, adding the raw fabric is produced at Hobbs Bonded Fibers in Waco, then shipped to First Line Technology for completion and packaging.

"We're learning new uses for it every day because it's a decontaminant," Kapoor said, adding that the company stays in touch with Ramkumar as customers ask whether the non-woven fabric is capable of taking on new challenges.

"Texas Tech is a great partner to work with," Kapoor said. "They do a lot in terms of technology transfer. We're always working with them and Hobbs to tweak the production line."

Source: <http://lubbockonline.com/money/2011-03-20/tech-developed-decontamination-cloth-reaches-market>

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