

Thermal imaging could be used to take people's temperatures once places re-open

Briana Whitney

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Two TSA workers at Phoenix Sky Harbor test positive for COVID-19

Two Transportation Security Administration (TSA) employees have tested positive for COVID-19 in Phoenix.



PHOENIX (3TV/CBS 5) -- As talks of how to re-open states continue, how can businesses or venues help keep people safe? One way could be with thermal cameras, and it's a possibility that's getting a lot more attention right now, including in Arizona.

Could this be our new normal? Walking into a building and having a thermal camera reading our body temperature before we're allowed in as a precaution.

"Thermal cameras are a fairly good idea," said Dr. Frank Lovecchio, an emergency medicine doctor in Phoenix. "They were used during the SARS epidemic, and the technology has improved so much."

Dr. Lovecchio said these could be a good way to quickly, and safely test a group of people for an elevated temperature. If they're showing signs of fever above 100.4 degrees or a higher temperature than many people before them, they could be asked to go through further testing or possibly be denied entry.

"They're fairly accurate, you could strike a beam, a non-toxic beam, on your forehead or on the person, and it'll tell you their temperature," he said.

One of the largest manufacturers of these thermal cameras, FLIR Systems, said Fortune 500 and 100 companies in Arizona have already reached out to them with interest.

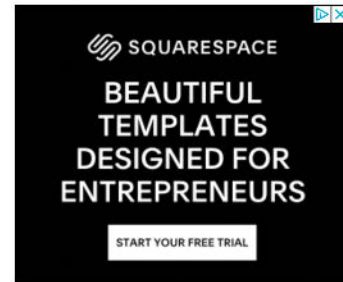
FLIR already provides the thermal cameras used by ADOT in their wrong-way detection system.

But, Dr. Lovecchio said the drawback is "when" people with COVID-19 develop a fever. "In fact, two to five days before they get the fever, they're sick, and they're very contagious at the time so it'll detect you when you have a fever, but you've kind of missed out on those days before," he said.

If companies or businesses decide to use these, Dr. Lovecchio said they would need to develop a plan on what to do if somebody does have a fever, but he said this could be the future at several places around town.

"First thing that comes to mind is maybe on the light rail, maybe people going into the airport. I think it's way too soon but sporting events, concerts, that sort of thing," Dr. Lovecchio said.

Phoenix Sky Harbor airport told Arizona's Family they're not



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currently implementing thermal imaging, but said they're always looking at additional methods of safety and will monitor as recommendations are updated.

The City of Phoenix said they're still evaluating measures that need to be taken to re-open their facilities. While they are considering taking temperatures, they do not currently have plans to implement thermal imaging.

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