

How IEEE Can Help You During the Current COVID-19 Crisis

Tom Coughlin, IEEE-USA Past President

Like most of you I am staying at home with my family. I am work remotely on various projects although it looks like business is slowing down for me, as for many folks. Most IEEE local meetings, and conferences in general, are being cancelled or going virtual. I am keeping busy fixing things around the house and doing whatever I can to protect my family from COVID-19—lots of hand washing and wiping things off with disinfectants. I started a new IEEE SSIT chapter in the Santa Clara Valley at the beginning of the year and we were able to have one in-person meeting before the “shelter at home” orders were made. We are planning what will be a virtual webinar meeting in early May.

I thought I would share with you some ideas about how IEEE learning programs can help you make use of any down- time to keep yourself current in your field and learn new skills and technologies, while away from the office. Also, to avoid social isolation I want to give you some tips on how you can continue to hold local IEEE chapter meetings using webex and other tools and record presentations for off-line use, for those not able to join the live meeting. Finally, I have some suggestions on what you might be able to do to make a difference in this time of crisis.

IEEE-USA offers a variety of ebooks and webinars related to developing soft skills that can be useful in being effective and advancing in your work. IEEE-USA ebooks can be found here: <https://ieeusa.org/shop/> and webinars can be found here: <https://ieeusa.org/careers/webinars/>.

The IEEE Learning Network (ILN), which has consolidated learning materials on a variety of different technical subjects from many different IEEE organizational units has dropped the price of its training materials for members by about 70%. ILN offers hundreds of continuing professional education courses on technical topics such as 5G, autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence, and much more. Created by in-demand industry experts, most courses offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or Professional Development Hours (PDHs). You can find all the ILN courses here: <https://bit.ly/2J5pVTQ>



Engineer Your Future

Start Learning



ILN is also offering free access to a variety of virtual events that you can watch at home on the latest developments in technology, engineering, STEM education and more. These are available live and on demand for IEEE members. Find out more at:

<https://innovationatwork.ieee.org/events/virtual-events/>. A recent event on eLearning to Support Distance Learning by Dr. Timothy Kurzwig and Jennifer Fong is available here: <https://bit.ly/2U94Dv8>

You can still be an active local IEEE volunteer while staying at home. IEEE can help you set up on-line meetings and even record them and post to an IEEE TV channel dedicated to volunteer recording of technical meetings. More information on this can be found here:

<https://site.ieee.org/vtools/remote-conferencing/>. You can set up a webex for your virtual meeting with a 3 business day turn-around here: <https://site.ieee.org/vtools/tools-ok/webex/webex-registration/>. a webex webinar for local section and chapter meetings through vTools. You can access all of the functions of vTools here: <https://site.ieee.org/vtools/>, including posting your event and reporting on IEEE member attendance afterwards.

What can you do in this time of crisis to make a difference? Here are some ideas. There are various groups that are working on projects such as an open source ventilator for acute care, making N95 type medical masks and various types of COVID testing stations. These are grass roots efforts by technologists to help deal with COVID-19 and similar medical emergencies. Most of these groups are busy and working on their projects, but if you have a useful skill or some unique idea, let me know and I can get you in contact with some of these folks (tom@tomcoughlin.com), mention COVID-19 Idea in your email title).



Finally, you could make your computer one of many computers (including mine) participating in folding@home to find therapies against COVID-19 (<https://foldingathome.org>). Folding@home is a distributed computing project set up by computational biologists. People from throughout the world download and run software to band together to make one of the largest supercomputers in the world.

Folding@home uses novel computational methods coupled to distributed computing, to simulate problems millions of times more challenging than previously achieved. Folding@home was launched 20 years ago to use crowdsourced computing for simulations to better understand diseases, particularly protein folding anomalies that could lead identification of binding sites for therapeutics. Finding pockets or holes in the coronavirus which can be attacked with drugs is a current focus of the folding@home project.

During these worrying times, your first responsibility is to keep yourself, your family and friends safe. Today that means working mostly in physical isolation. IEEE can help you use any down time at home to brush up on your skills and learn technologies and practices that can help you in your future career. You can also keep in touch with your colleagues and friends through virtual events, and IEEE has resources to help you do that. Finally, there may be ways that you can actively or passively help solve the many issues that this pandemic has created and perhaps even help to find a cure.

Keep well and keep learning.

Tom Coughlin