StemRad

An Israeli firm makes protective equipment for astronauts, military personnel and medical workers.

StemRad creates gear to protect people from radiation, focusing on protecting specific parts of the body with equipment that's light and enables the wearer to remain mobile. The Israeli firm had co-developed equipment to protect astronauts from radiation exposure from solar particle events through a collaboration with Lockheed Martin. That project received research and development support from the Space Florida-Israel Innovation Partnership program, which kicked off StemRad's relationship with the Sunshine State.

After its initial contact with the Space Florida-Israel Innovation Partnership program, the company became part of the Florida-Israel Business Accelerator, which introduced StemRad to potential clients and end users, research partners and investors with the hopes of attracting the high-tech company to the Tampa Bay area. StemRad opened a U.S. office in Tampa in 2017.

About 10 employees work in that location at the Embarc Collective startup hub, handling elements like business development, sales and field installations. Another 15 or so employees work at the company's headquarters in Tel Aviv, which still concentrates on research and development efforts. StemRad CEO Oren Milstein now calls Florida home, relocating his family here once things started to take off in Tampa.

"We have many, many touch points for the company here," says Milstein. "We have three verticals — space, first respond-

StemRad's AstroRad radiation protection vest is being used on the International Space Station and will be part of NASA's Artemis I mission.

ers/military and medical — and we have touch points for all three here in Florida and in Tampa specifically."

That includes entities like U.S. Central Command, Florida Power & Light's nuclear power plants and players in the burgeoning space industry at Cape Canaveral. Tampa General Hospital proved a valuable partner in StemRad's development of StemRad MD, an X-ray protection product for medical professionals; Dr. Bruce Zwiebel, director of interventional radiology at the University of South Florida and Tampa General Hospital, also serves as StemRad's chief medical officer.

"They were basically the proving ground for the first iterations of the solution, the place to basically test and prove that our solution was market ready," says Milstein. "Then they were ultimately also the first buyers of our solution, and we grew from that nucleus nationwide."

Florida has also been good for the company financially. The Florida-Israel Business Accelerator helped connect StemRad to its lead investor, Jeff Vinik, owner and chairman of the Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team. Other local investors have followed. Milstein estimates that the company has gotten about USD10 million in investments through its Florida presence.

What's next? StemRad's AstroRad radiation protection vest is already being used on the International Space Station and will be part of NASA's Artemis I mission. The company plans to continue expanding its current business lines and is teaming up with distribution partners with global reach to help equip more

Dr. Bruce Zwiebel, director of interventional radiology at USF and Tampa General, is StemRad's chief medical officer.

medical professionals, military personnel and first responders with radiation protection. "We have warehouses in Tampa that make for easy deployment into the rest of the country with all of our solutions," says Milstein.

— *By Beth Luberecki*

Why Florida?

Oren Milstein, StemRad's CEO, cites several advantages of being in Florida:

▶ The company credits its relationship with the Florida-Israel Business Incubator as integral to its success in Florida and beyond. He advises other foreign companies interested in a Florida location to forge similar connections. "Being led and nurtured by any kind of local group would allow them a soft landing here in Florida that would open doors and make the transition a lot smoother, both at a professional level and also at a social, networking and personal level," he says.

▶ Tampa's affordable cost of living

▶ The city's size — not too big, not too small

Oren Milstein

"I think the people here are very open-minded," says Milstein. "They're not rigid in their way of thinking, and they're adventurous in nature. All of the good attributes of a place that could be fertile ground for startups I think are all here."

RESEARCH ASSET

Cyber Florida

Created by the state in 2014, the Florida Center for Cybersecurity at the University of South Florida in Tampa — usually called Cyber Florida — wants to make Florida a national leader in cyber-security. It carries out initiatives to increase educational opportunities and awareness, promotes research and conducts outreach to help governments, businesses and ordinary citizens understand cyber-security risks.
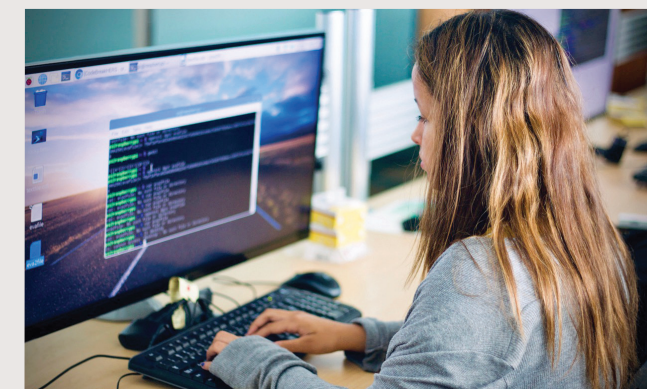
Recently, Cyber Florida worked with USF to expand its single, multidisciplinary master's degree in cyber-security to allow students to narrow their focus with four new, specialized cyber-security master's programs concentrating on areas like cyber-intelligence and digital forensics. "This will give students the skill sets they need," says Mike McConnell, executive director of Cyber Florida and a former director of the National Security Agency.

There's a well-documented shortfall between the number of trained cyber-security workers versus the available jobs. To help create a stronger talent pipeline in Florida, Cyber Florida kicked off an initiative called Operation K12 to help introduce kids to cyber-security careers. "If we're really going to change the understanding and interest and awareness of students coming into higher education, we need to start in the grade schools," says McConnell.

Mike McConnell

His message to cyber-businesses considering a move or expansion to Florida? "We have the skills that cost much less money and a supportive government structure," he says. "Think of it as Silicon Valley at a much-reduced cost."

35 — Number of Florida public-school districts engaged with Operation K12, which includes the state's three largest (Miami-Dade, Broward, and Hillsborough counties)

89% — Percentage of Florida public-school teachers and students reached by Operation K12

USD3.74 million — Amount in seed grants from Cyber Florida received by nine State University System of Florida institutions