

Covid vaccines: Medical refrigerators makers gearing up to meet mkt needs



Leading medical refrigerator makers such as Godrej Appliances, Voltas and Blue Star are gearing up to cater to needs of [Covid vaccine](#) manufacturers by enhancing their cooling technologies in view of the requirement to store vaccines at ultra-low temperatures.

Such refrigerator [companies](#) are also looking to ramp up their production capacity in anticipation of growing demand of new-age medical refrigerators that can preserve vaccines at a temperature of as low as minus 80 degrees celsius.

Medical refrigerator manufacturers, which have witnessed a substantial jump in their business after India started the vaccination programme with Covishield and Covaxin, are

now open to form tie-ups with the pharma [companies](#) that are importing coronavirus vaccines.

Godrej & Boyce, part of over USD 4.1 billion Godrej Group and a leading maker of medical refrigerators in India, said it is quite open to collaborate with vaccine makers such as Pfizer, whose Covid vaccine is required to be kept at minus 80 degrees celsius.

When asked about a possibility of forming any partnership with Pfizer or Moderna, Godrej & Boyce Executive Director Nyrika Holkar told PTI: "As an organisation, we believe in strong partnerships and collaborations."

"Now as procurement of vaccinations has been opened up for private-sector corporations and hospitals, we are also looking at partnerships and collaborations in this regard," she added.

Godrej & Boyce, in partnership with the UK-based The Sure Chill Company, sells medical refrigerators that use the properties of water to keep vaccines in the desired temperature range.

Its step-down unit Godrej Appliances, which manufactures medical refrigerators, has increased capacity from 10,000 units to 35,000 units and has witnessed a multi-fold growth in sales.

"For Moderna, we have already got 10,000 units on order. A part of that has already been supplied. For Pfizer which requires -86 degrees storage temperature, we are ready with our product range to meet the needs of the market," said a Godrej Appliances official.

While Tata Group firm Voltas is importing specialised deep freezers that run on ultra-low temperatures and has also tied up with international partners.

"We are already in the process of importing ultra-low temperature deep freezers (-40 to -86 deg C) to meet the requirements of other vaccines like Pfizer. We are importing these specialised deep freezer models in 300 litre capacity and above, and have tied up with our international partners," said Voltas MD and CEO Pradeep Bakshi.

Voltas will be ready to cater to this requirement by the time these vaccines arrive in India by August 2021, he said. "We are also simultaneously developing specialised ice-lined refrigerator and deep freezer models for standard +ve and ve temp range."

According to Bakshi, the industry is broadly divided into three segments - below 20 degree celsius, -20 to -40 deg cel and above -40 deg cel.

The third segment is a niche, and as of now, the industry is importing this segment, he added.

For the current vaccination drive of the government, related to Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik, Voltas has a range of solutions to serve different requirements.

Blue Star Managing Director B Thiagarajan said the segment is very small and the demand is only for a very brief period.

There are three elements in this business primary cold storage at the main distribution centres, freezers at the intermediate centres and vaccine transporters.

The volume is so small that a 400 litres freezer can have a storage of 76,000 doses of vaccines and simple one thousand sq feet cold room could store over 1.45 lakh doses.

"Required volume is not that much. The demand would come and soon go away. The incremental market size of [vaccination](#) storage is also not very big, its juts around Rs 250 crore," he said adding that most of the order from the government and some from private hospitals has been finalised.

Now Pfizer and Moderna are coming, which require storage at minus 80-degree temperature but he is not sure about the volume of purchase.

"We are selling refrigerators with up to -80 degree celsius, we have some orders. Around 600 freezers would be sold, Thiagarajan said adding that "people think it is a big opportunity. It is just Rs 250 crore market.

[Companies](#)