

*Water treatment industry
bands together to bring
safe drinking water to
the people of Haiti*



Five Days – 50,000 Lives

By Andrew Warnes

***F**rom March 1 to March 5, 2010, something never previously attempted was set into motion. The mission: take a small team of water treatment professionals, give them a small white pick-up truck, point them down the rubble-filled alleys and streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and ask them to bring microbiologically safe drinking water to 50,000 or more people.*

Throw into the mix no electricity, no fuel for vehicles or generators, no Web access, seismic aftershocks, no security, 90°F sultry days and insect-infested nights, and see what could be accomplished.

Devastation

At 4:53 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010, a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti. In an instant, more than 2.3% of the nation's population was killed (230,000 and climbing). More

than 3% of the population (300,000-plus persons) were injured. Ten percent of the entire population (more than a million persons) were left homeless. An estimated 250,000 homes and 30,000 businesses were damaged beyond repair. Since the initial earthquake, more than 50 aftershocks of magnitude 4.5 or greater have occurred.

Already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, the nation of Haiti was incapable of recovering from a disaster of this scale on its own. The

day after the earthquake occurred, many in the water treatment industry who are very familiar with the risk of waterborne illness after events like these began to make plans. For one small company in Colorado, it was the beginning of an incredible journey that has still not ended.

A New Venture

Slightly more than two years ago, couple Carmen and Jack Barker of the Denver, Colo., area decided to leverage their success as designers, builders and managers of small community water treatment systems in the western U.S. into something new. Sizing up the market and the regulatory needs of small communities, they invested everything they had saved into establishing Innovative Water Technologies (IWT). Their focus was to take all of the best technologies available and package them into compact, rugged, cost-effective and regulatory-compliant



Above: The GE SunSpring at work at the SOS Children's Village in Santo, Haiti. Right: The SunSpring can produce 5,000 gal of safe drinking water per day.

community water systems (CWS). Along the way, IWT captured the imagination of a number of key water technology suppliers whose products went into building IWT-packaged community water systems. One product in particular was on everyone's mind after the earthquake struck Haiti.

A Perfect Match

The IWT SunSpring is a self-contained, solar-powered microbiological purification system capable of drawing upon surface, well, lake, pond and irrigation ditch water to make microbiologically safe drinking water. Without external electrical supplies, these rugged systems can produce up to 5,000 gal of purified drinking water per day. They also have the ability to pump that water up from wells up to 90 ft deep.

Originally developed for the safe drinking water and regulatory compliance needs of national parks, campgrounds, military forward operating

bases, eco-tourism lodges, remote oil and gas exploration sites and tropical camps for pharmaceutical research, the IWT SunSpring seemed ideal for emergency relief. The issue was ramping up production fast enough to serve Haiti and deploying the systems safely and effectively.

A partnership was formed that eventually included water treatment equipment manufacturers Pentair, General Electric, Shurflo, Wellmate, Pentek, Hypro and other companies. It also brought on board humanitarian organizations like The GE Foundation, The Pentair Foundation, The William J. Clinton Foundation, UNICEF, James Lee Witt Associates, Esperanza.org and others. It was the combined efforts of these assembled partners that sprung into action to back IWT.

During the ramp-up for 24/7 production, a regular procession of FedEx and UPS vehicles rode in to the small town of Rocky Ford, Colo., to deliver

parts for which extra shifts had been created in locations as diverse as Milwaukee, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Nebraska and Texas. Everything from company trucks to personal pickups were drawn into regular deliveries of completed SunSpring systems in crates to the cargo terminal at Denver International Airport. IWT President Jack Barker personally left for Haiti to oversee the installation and start-up of the SunSpring systems across the city of Port-au-Prince and the surrounding area.

Five Systems in Five Days

All of these efforts culminated in one spectacular week, when Jack and his team of volunteers and the employees of Esperanza.org (an NGO founded by Major League Baseball player David Valle and others), fanned out to successfully install five systems in five days serving 50,000 or more people with microbiologically safe

drinking water. This was only possible due to the efforts of many people across the U.S., Canada and Mexico who all banded together in a mission to save lives. *wqp*

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- Read updates on the IWT Haiti Today blog at www.innovativeh2o.com/HaitiToday/haitiToday.htm.
- See more photos of IWT's work in Haiti on their Picasa albums at <http://picasaweb.google.com/IWTSunSpring>.
- Read "Solar-powered water purification units ship to Haiti" on GE Reports at www.gereports.com/solar-powered-water-purification-units-ship-to-haiti/.
- See a CBS news video about the SunSpring units heading to Haiti at <http://cbs4denver.com/green/haiti.water.purifier.2.1434244.html>.

