

The Right Time for Bottled Water, POU



Lingering concerns over the economy remain high on everyone's minds. With 2002 just a short time away, financial analysts already are predicting what the year will look like for our nation—some are positive and some make you want to horde your money in your mattress.

The downward turn of the economy throughout the year compounded with the Sept. 11 attacks have wreaked havoc on some industries while opening opportunity for others. Fortunately for us, it sounds like the water industry has a fighting chance to survive cutbacks, bankruptcies and layoffs.

As the threat of bioterrorism becomes more real, businesses carrying items related to "survival" are seeing increased sales. Although in October, the IBWA had seen only a slight increase in sales overall since the attacks, individual companies have reported increased sales since Sept. 11. This partly is due to bottled water being named as one of the must-have items in case of further terrorism. Areas such as the East and West Coasts are seeing the most increases. However, the initial reaction to the attacks has slowed, and most companies have reported fewer surges in sales. With the relocation of businesses in New York, and people feeling insecure, bottled water serves as a solution for many consumers. According to an article in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, some companies are reporting 20 to 40 percent increases in sales while others have seen even higher surges such as Evans Natural Spring Water in New Jersey, which reported a 100 percent increase in sales in the weeks after the attacks.

The bottled water industry has been reluctant to create any panic or fear for the public to help raise sales, said Stephen Kay, vice president of communications for IBWA. However, in the face of an emergency, bottled water is viewed as a necessity. "It is regulated by FDA for food-grade quality and it is tamper-evident," he said.

The POU industry also is offering options such as distillation, ozone and ultraviolet units. Although technologies still haven't been proven to treat for such things as smallpox or anthrax, these technologies are coming to the forefront as alternatives to combating bioterrorism. With these solutions on their shelves, water treatment dealers will have households and businesses nationwide rushing to own them. On page 18, *WQP* presents an article discussing the threat of bioterrorism and whether or not POU can offer safety and security.

It is for all of these reasons that bottled water and POU may just be the right industries to be in during such troubled times.

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