

BW Market Proves Generous



Amidst any emergency, bottled water's demand increases. Tornadoes, floods, power outages and even times of war can cause the rise in demand. Bottled water is promoted as being a key product to store for an emergency, obviously because it is a basic need, but also because currently there is no expiration date for bottled water as long as it is stored properly. All of this makes it tempting for retailers to spike prices.

Due to the gasoline "crisis" in Arizona, the state began discussing legislation that would eliminate the risk of retailers price gouging during emergencies. The legislation would cover a variety of products from gasoline to, yes, our very own bottled water. Attorney General Terry Goddard and other lawmakers are using the state's recent gasoline hike to springboard legislation that would put a cap on prices. Goddard had stated, "There is a need for some limits on what wholesalers and retailers charge when a disaster makes a product scarce." Some states already have laws in place such as California's law that limits any price hike to no more than 10 percent during an emergency. As I am writing, no details have been released regarding the planned legislation, and Arizonians, although having received some relief, continue to face steep prices at the pump.

Bottled water's status as a top product to have during an emergency is making it named as a prime target for gouges, yet I see past events as having instead displayed the generosity of the bottled water community. As a tribute to bottled water in this issue, I would like to point out how the industry has aided in relief efforts.

During the recent Northeastern power outage, businesses and residents of communities placed on boil water alerts relied on bottled water. The demand had spiked and, in some areas, shelves were emptied shortly after the power outage began. Ice Mountain aided with Detroit's emergency relief efforts by donating more than 15,000 cases (nearly 400,000 20-ounce bottles) of bottled water. (See Industry Scrapbook on page 39 for the full article.)

Bottled water companies also came to the rescue during the 9/11 emergency. For example, Pennsylvania-American Water Co. donated at least 561 cases of bottled water for the volunteers and offered to donate bottled water to local fire and emergency crews. Disaster-area Culligan dealers offered more than 350,000 bottles of water, and employees donated their time, money and efforts as well.

In 2002, after severe ice storms in Oklahoma City, Cherokee Bottled Water employees loaded up nine tractor-trailers with 81,000 liters of bottled water for victims. This was the second year it had donated to the aftermath of ice storms.

While some retailers may try to take advantage of the consumer during times of need, the bottled water industry continues to be there for the nation during a crisis.

Speaking of bottled water, page 16 has our IBWA Show Guide to help you in planning your trip to Chicago. You also can visit our new website at www.wqpmag.com for further bottled water and IBWA show information.

I can't wait to see you at our booth (#S9216) in the IBWA pavilion at the Worldwide Food Expo in October.

Wendi

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