

Ernie Wilmink



Taking Action

Amid the devastation from the earthquake that hit Haiti in January, the need for clean, safe water is one of the most pressing. Ernie Wilmink, president of "The Key" Water & Air Intl., is leading an effort to raise money to send an emergency water mobile response unit (EWMRU) to the struggling country.

Rebecca Wilhelm: Why did you begin this project to donate an EWMRU to Haiti?

Ernie Wilmink: We get shocked by certain messages in the world, and then we move on. Not me; it follows me. When I was sitting at home and saw what was happening there, what struck me the most was first, of course, that they didn't have water available—I saw all these people carrying around bottled water and shipping it over and so on. An EWMRU can provide 21,000 gal per day (gpd). When you compare it to bottled water, that's 6,000 20-oz bottles per hour.

Another thing that struck me is that everything is barred—you can't get anywhere, there are no roads and there is no infrastructure anymore. People are completely shut out from the outside, they can't even reach them with trucks. I'm seeing all this and thinking, "There is the technology; this can't be right."

The EWMRU can be pulled in, but also can be airlifted. As long as there is a water source, it can be there.

There was an extra push for me when I saw reports that kids and adults were getting their wounds infected, and their limbs were being cut off because there was no clean water available to treat their wounds.

With the EWMRU, there are seven stages of treatment to make pure drinking water, and there is an eighth step, a mobile disinfection unit. The water that comes out of the sprayer has an oxidation reduction potential reading of about 750 milivolts. That means it is accepted by the International Health Assn. When it comes in contact with a bacteria or virus, it kills it instantly. So what was hurting me also was that I knew we had it, and it could be there.

When I put it all together, I thought, "OK, Ernie, you have to do something; how far can you go?" I

was willing to do all the work and everything, which comes to about \$100,000, and then you need about another \$89,000. There must be a way that somehow, there are 100 or 1,000 people or however many it takes, to get that \$89,000 together.

Wilhelm: How does the EWMRU system work?

Wilmink: As long as there is a water source, including seawater, the unit has its own pumps and 50,000-watt generator, which can even be used to create light when needed in an emergency situation. The pumps take in the water source, and on the other side comes out absolutely pure drinking water that meets all standards.

Wilhelm: How will it be helpful in the current situation in Haiti?

Wilmink: The answer is clear. First, by providing 21,000 gpd, and we now have a tool for the doctors and nurses, so they have not just clean water, but a disinfection capacity with that same water, by using our ozone technology.

Wilhelm: How can people help contribute?

Wilmink: We opened a fund called the Haiti Water Fund at The Bank of Lindsay in Lindsay, Neb.; all the donations go there. There is nothing wrong with donating to the Red Cross, etc.—the best institutions we have in the world—but if you like to be personal and attached to a project, here you have something that is personal. When you see that unit go to Haiti working to provide safe water to the people, then that's part of you. I envision when the unit is ready for shipment to Haiti, I would like to invite the people that contribute so they will get a picture of their unit, because it is also their unit.

Wilhelm: When is the target date for getting this unit to Haiti?

Wilmink: The target date depends on how fast we can have the money in. We build everything ourselves. The trailer is ready for us to put the equipment in. We can build a unit complete and ready to go in about 15 working days.

Wilhelm: Please explain why you have partnered with the U.S. Navy Seabees.

Wilmink: The unit will be to the U.S. Navy Seabees because they are in Haiti long term; they are the rebuilders, the people who clean up the roads and do the infrastructure, etc. There is a need for this unit long term. When the others are gone, or not able to carry around bottled water—there is a continuous need for that kind of stuff.

Also, then I just have to make one trip and instruct the technical people from the Seabees. I designed the unit so that in one day, an afternoon, someone can run it completely by themselves. They are good technicians; these people know how to work with machinery. That means that it is in good hands.

To learn more about this project or to donate to the Haiti Water Fund, contact "The Key" Water & Air Intl., Inc., at 800.539.6220 or by e-mail at office@keywater.com, or send donations to: The Bank of Lindsay, c/o Haiti Water Fund, 102 Pine Street, Lindsay, NE 68644.

Rebecca Wilhelm is managing editor for Water Quality Products. Wilhelm can be reached at 847.391.1007 or by e-mail at bwilhelm@sgcmail.com.

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March

09 – 12 WQA Aquatech USA
Orange County
Convention Center
Orlando, FL
tel: 630.505.0160
www.wqa-aquatech.com

22 – 25 American Filtration & Separations Society Annual Conference
San Antonio, TX
tel: 612.861.1277
www.afssociety.org

April

11 – 15 NGWA 2010 Groundwater Summit
Denver, CO
tel: 800.551.7379
www.ngwa.org

27 – 28 International Activated Carbon Conference
Los Angeles, CA
tel: 800.367.2587
http://pacslabs.com

May

02 – 04 Aquatech China 2010
Shanghai, China
www.china.aquatech-trade.com/aquatechn09/es

17 – 19 American Backflow Prevention Assn. Education Conference & Tradeshow
New Orleans, LA
tel: 979.846.7606
www.abpa.org

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