

Safe Water in a Crisis

Mobile water systems deployed to provide clean water in disaster situations

By Jamie Wolf

Imagine surviving a natural disaster only to learn that clean water is nowhere to be found. Now imagine that same situation, and, with a tablespoon of salt, having the ability to create potable water within an hour.

Water is the Earth's most precious resource—especially during times of need. The importance of fresh drinking water was the driving force behind HD Supply Waterworks' donation of two WaterStep M-100 systems to the National Rural Water Assn. (NRWA).

Mobile Solution

Kevin Renckens, national sales director for HD Supply Waterworks, spearheaded the project and was in attendance for training events in the two states the company donated systems to, Arkansas and New York. "While we would all prefer to have nothing interrupt our supply of drinking water, the reality is there are a number of emergency situations that can and do occur [that] make safe drinking water unavailable," Renckens said. "HD Supply Waterworks is very excited to work with WaterStep to provide a mobile water system for areas hit by disaster.

"This easy-to-use, environmentally friendly system can be deployed quickly to provide thousands of gallons a day of safe drinking water in areas of need," he explained. "[The] Arkansas and New York Rural Water associations will be able to deploy [them] directly or to neighboring states as part of their emergency support, and we are thrilled to be able to provide this unit to support their efforts."

Jerry Webb, CEO of HD Supply Waterworks, had



Training sessions were held in New York and Arkansas to demonstrate how to operate the mobile water systems.

similar sentiments. "We are honored to be able to assist our municipal customers and the organizations that serve them," he said. "Water is the world's most precious commodity and it is our responsibility to do our part to protect it."

WaterStep, the organization behind the M-100 purification system, is a nonprofit that primarily focuses on providing safe water to communities in developing countries through training in water purification and health education. In the U.S., the organization assists various state organizations with water crisis situations evolving mainly from natural disasters.

Training & Treatment

NRWA selected the New York and Arkansas chapters to receive the systems. Both chapters have hosted training events for representatives from across their regions to demonstrate how the systems operate.

As part of the training, the system and its parts were demonstrated in front of the group. "Upon adding a handful of salt—one of the most common and readily available raw materials on the planet—the system starts by generating chlorine from it via water electrolysis," said Kurtis Daniels, director of training and field operations for WaterStep. The chlorine gas then is introduced into the water and absorbed thoroughly. This small amount of chlorine is enough to disinfect 38,000 liters of water per day, enough for about 10,000 people. The system is powered with either a 12-V car battery or solar panels.

The system also has a filtration attachment that fits precisely to the hoses that come with it. These can fit onto any type of hose at the water source with their multiple attachments and adaptors. Whether water is drawn from a surface source, like a lake, or provided through another source, it can be housed in the two included collapsible 1,500-gal water tanks and then distributed into transportable containers. All parts are stored on a metal cart, which allows for ease of mobility.

Dennis Sternberg, CEO of the Arkansas Rural Water Assn., who helped organize the one-day training event at his facility, was eager for his colleagues to see the system firsthand. "Rural water responders are on location assisting to make sure that water systems are back in place during a crisis, so it's only logical that they have a WaterStep unit right by their side," he said. "This addresses the need of having drinking water that can be easily and effectively decontaminated [at] a moment's notice."

Patricia Scalera, CEO of the New York Rural Water Assn., added, "The fact that we will have this in our back pocket to utilize as needed is a tremendous gift," she said. "Water is extremely valuable, and even more so in a crisis situation. To have the ability to deploy this system [at] a moment's notice and make a tremendous impact in our community is priceless."

These units are strategically sited on the East Coast and in the U.S. heartland, enabling them

to be deployed quickly.

"Clean and safe water is vital to all of us. It is a privilege for us to give back to an organization and a cause that is [aligned with] who we are as a company," said Steve LeClair, president of HD Supply Waterworks. "We have always offered support to our utility customers, and we

realized that this is one more way that we can show good stewardship to those on the front lines of the water industry." **W&P**

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