

# Albany product tested on last shuttle



Keith Lampi, vice president of operations, show the quality control process for their Hydopacks Monday afternoon at Hydration Technology Innovations in Albany. (David Patton/Democrat-Herald)

Before it landed for the last time, the space shuttle Atlantis completed one final mission: a test of an Albany-based product.

NASA's shuttle program ended last week when the craft touched down at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. But thanks to a successful test on Hydration Technology Innovations equipment, future space travelers can be assured they will have access to a nutritious drink.

"From what they are willing to tell us it was a successful test," said Keith Lampi, vice president of operations at HTI.

HTI's hydopacks were tested as a source for providing fluids for astronauts in case of disruption in the availability of potable water. The packs can purify water of any quality, by osmosis, pulling it through a membrane and leaving all contaminants behind. The result is a drinkable liquid similar to a sports drink.

Lampi said NASA approached HTI some time ago about the use of the packs in space flight.

"We've been waiting two years," Lampi said. "It was just a matter of the technology finally matching need."

Although the technology is basically the same as that used successfully in relief efforts in Haiti and Kenya, NASA asked for special valve fittings and some changes in polymers used in the pack.

The main polymer, PVC, can't be used in space because of possible fire hazards, so NASA specified its own.

The four-layered pouch also uses a sports drink mixture provided by NASA that contains stored energy in various sugars.

Lampi said that means any type of moisture, be it condensation, sweat, urine or other wastewater, can be used successfully with the packs.

"Its simplicity is attractive," Lampi said. "An astronaut doesn't want complicated in an emergency."

Lampi said the fact the pack doesn't require hydraulic pressure, as in filters, heat or electricity helped sell it.

"A core group of scientists have been focused on this for several years," he said.

Lampi said the successful space test has opened the door for HTI to work with NASA on continued research on the project.

Lampi was on the East Coast when the shuttle was completing its mission. He got a call at 5 a.m. telling him the test was under way and then a text from NASA saying it was a success.

"Waiting for the test was hard. Being last on the agenda means it could have been scrapped at any time," Lampi said.

Despite the historical significance of being the last shuttle test, Lampi said if he had to choose he would have preferred to have been first.

**HTI employs about 50 people at 2484 Ferry St.**

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