

Aid after the earthquake

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By [Steve Lathrop, Albany Democrat-Herald](#) democratherald.com | Posted: Saturday, August 28, 2010 7:15 am | [No Comments Posted](#)



Buy this photo John Reese of Hydration Technology Innovations shows a water filtration system like those he set up for earthquake survivors in Haiti. (David Patton/Democrat-Herald)

About HTI

Humanitarian aid for countries and communities hit by natural or man-made disasters is just part of what Hydrology Technology Innovations offers.

Its work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other disaster relief organizations has provided portable water filtration systems for communities and individuals around the world, but applications of the Albany company's product are widespread.

HTI systems are used in wastewater filtration for the oil and gas industry, municipal wastewater, agricultural filtration and military water filtration and desalination.

Established in 1986 in Albany, HTI employs more than 40 people and maintains an office and plant here, although corporate headquarters are now in Scottsdale, Ariz. Clients include NASA, Boeing and every branch of the military.

Restless nights, little food and the threat of another aftershock were just part of what John Reese and members of the Hydration Technology Innovations relief team dealt with during more than two weeks in earthquake-ravaged Haiti.

Only four days after the quake hit on Jan. 12, the Albany company sent Reese and his friend Brian Graffenberger to aid a team with installation of eight hydro-wells that brought immediate filtration for water in devastated Haitian villages. Systems were provided at greatly reduced cost and a private individual covered shipping.

“Personally it was the most challenging thing I’ve ever done,” Reese said this week in an interview. “We saw bodies piled on top of each other. It was traumatizing.”

The production manager for HTI said team members slept in driveways and had little food to eat during their stay. It was the steady stream of aftershocks, however, that kept team members on edge.

“You could feel it and hear the rumble of buildings. It felt like something could collapse around you at any moment,” said Reese, who has been with HTI for 15 years.

But team members didn’t lose site of their mission. All eight systems were installed and about 14,000 hydration packs — single use and hand-held filtration systems — were distributed.

Reese said the systems did their job, purifying 150 gallons of water per day for about a month.

“Even by the time we left, a lot more long-term solutions were getting put in place,” Reese said. “We filled our niche.”

Sugar, a vital part of the operating system, was acquired in the Dominican Republic. It was shipped across the border to Haiti via a fleet of Honda 90 motorcycles, each carrying three 110-pound bags.

“There were about 40 bags biked in,” he said.

One of the most difficult stops was at the beginning of the trip. Reese said the airport “was a zoo.” With so many people involved in relief efforts, finding out what to do and where to go, or even just moving around, was difficult.

“Once they figured out who you were it got a little easier,” he said.

Reese credited the military for its help in transporting the systems. The team spent about 10 days in Haiti before getting a five-day break, then went back for an additional 10 days.

The Haiti quake, which hit with a 7.0 magnitude, had more than 50 aftershocks, killed more than 200,000 people and left nearly a million homeless.

“We were in there to reach people with an immediate need and we accomplished that,” Reese said. “It was an incredible adventure.”

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