



ITT

Quick response to Asian tsunami

The tsunami that struck southern Asia on 26 December 2004 was one of the worst natural disasters in recent history. Besides leaving thousands killed and injured, the wave left many more in danger of contaminated water supplies and waterborne diseases.

Just a few hours after the tsunami hit, ITT began preparing for the delivery of 58 portable water treatment units. Combined, these portable membrane filtration systems are capable of treating more than 380,000 liters of water every hour, or enough safe water for more than 500,000 people. The units are diesel powered – enabling them to operate in areas without electricity – and simple to operate and maintain. They provide the level of treatment necessary to combat waterborne diseases such as cholera and giardiasis, a diarrheal illness caused by a one-celled parasite.

The company targeted Sri Lanka as a place where water filtration systems would be most effective. Working through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Industrial Services Bureau (ISB), a local nongovernmental organization, ITT got volunteers to the scene quickly. ISB got the local assistance needed, helping to quickly install the filtration systems.

“In the wake of the devastation, it was important for us to put together a US-Sri Lanka partnership that could deploy with speed and supply the equipment that best met the needs of tsunami survivors,” said Dr. Ananda Mallawatantri, country director of the US-Asia Environmental Partnership Program of USAID.

According to a UN study, freshwater supplies in countries hit by the tsunami were immediately under serious threat. Drinking water sources had been contaminated by saltwater, sewage, toxic waste and asbestos from buildings, and every well on the coast of Sri Lanka may have been affected. It added that shallow wells and groundwater supplies, especially on small islands, were contaminated with saltwater.

Agricultural land has also been damaged by saltwater, which the study said would affect crops in the short term.

Four product experts from ITT spent more than two weeks in Sri Lanka teaching local people, including the Sri Lankan army and navy, to install, operate and redeploy the equipment, which will remain in Sri Lanka to provide ongoing relief.

In addition to the membrane filtration units, ITT also shipped gas-fed chlorinators to relief organizers in the region. The equipment allows people without electricity to treat contaminated water supplies with chlorine and provide safe, drinkable water. The Sri Lankan navy and ISB are overseeing the equipment and its continuous deployment.



Shallow wells and groundwater supplies, especially on small islands, were contaminated with saltwater.

