

By Glenn Land and Bill Harrison, Aduk, Inc.

Growing Awareness of POU

The future of safe drinking water lies squarely in the hands of the point-of-use (POU) water purification industry. Growing awareness among decision-makers and consumers is the force behind the increasing importance of the POU industry.

Decisions

Decision-makers are aware of the limited and unsustainable contaminant removal in many products. They are aware of biofilming and the need to eliminate wastewater. They are aware of regulatory issues. And they are paying more attention to the direct and indirect costs of POU products. Industry response to this awareness must be the production of high-quality products having the greatest dealer, customer and consumer benefits.

Challenge

The POU industry faces a serious challenge. Water contamination is the cumulative result of all types of pollution during the last several decades. Air pollution and ground pollution can cause water pollution. Approximately 97 percent of water on this planet is salt water. Of the remaining 3 percent roughly 96 percent is ground water and about 4 percent is surface water. Most of this water is now contaminated. Safe drinking water will become the single most valuable commodity on the planet within a few short years and "wars will be fought over water rights" (World Health Organization). A common denominator of every person on this planet is that our bodies are mostly made up of water (approximately 60 percent of an adult's body weight) and we can't live without it. "Demand for water purification continues to grow internationally due to economic expansion, scarcity of usable water, concern about water quality and regulatory requirements" (Industry Report). "Demand for drinking water world wide will increase three to five fold" (Helmut Keiser Consultancy).

Effectively reducing pollution of the global water supply will require new economic models with emphasis on a sustainable economy in concert with promoting a sustainable environment. In the meantime, considering the present state of global drinking water resources, the emergence of the POU industry is not surprising. There also are additional concerns regarding protection of municipal water supplies from terrorists. Clearly the social and economic implications of contaminants in drinking water are far-reaching and are, in fact, immeasurable. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" has never been more appropriate.

During the First International Symposium on Safe Drinking Water (May 1998, in Washington, D.C.) a consensus was reached by governments throughout the world and the international scientific community. There was general agreement that problems associated with providing safe drinking water are overwhelming. Simply

put, governments including the U.S. government cannot properly address future safe drinking water needs. This may have been the first significant government recognition of the POU industry. It also placed a tremendous responsibility on the POU industry and spurred interest in new, innovative technology.

The events of Sept. 11, 2001, acted as a catalyst to further generate awareness of present and potential problems associated with the provision of safe drinking water. It awakened us to the fact that safe drinking water is no longer a given; it is provisional. Avoiding present and potential problems simply is no longer an option. It is an issue

World Security Depends on Averting Water Wars

More than five million people die each year from water related diseases—10 times the number killed in wars. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned, "Fierce national competition over water resources has prompted fears that water issues contain the seeds of violent conflict."

A looming crisis that overshadows nearly two-thirds of the Earth's population is drawing closer because of continued human mismanagement of water, population growth and changing weather patterns, UN organizations reported.

Of the more than six billion people alive today, Annan said, "an estimated 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and 2.5 billion people have no access to proper sanitation. By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population is likely to live in countries with moderate or severe water shortages."

Later this year, heads of state and government, nongovernmental organizations, private sector representatives and many others will gather in Johannesburg for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed next year the International Year of Freshwater. Everyone has a stake in seizing these opportunities to chart a decisive course of action for meeting the Millennium Development Goals on access to freshwater.

The UN agencies are making freshwater access a priority for action this year in advance of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is now launching a major project for the Volga/Caspian Basin. Representatives

of 39 Russian Federation provinces and republics will be working with all five of UNESCO's program areas to create an interdisciplinary development plan that will balance the hydrological, ecological and socio-economic needs of the basin.

UNESCO director general Koichiro Matsuura said, "Underpinning this approach is the conviction that only by integrating scientific and ethical principles with socially sound practices can we secure a sustainable water world for generations to come."

UNESCO is hosting the Secretariat of the World Water Assessment Programme. Through a concerted effort involving 23 UN agencies, the programme will produce the World Water Development Report, whose first edition will be released at the 3rd World Water Forum at Kyoto, Japan, in March 2003.

The average person needs a minimum of 1.3 gallons (five liters) of water per day to survive in a moderate climate at an average activity level, according to UN figures. The minimum amount of water needed for drinking, cooking, bathing and sanitation is 13 gallons (50 liters).

This year, water pollution, poor sanitation and water shortages will kill more than 12 million people, said Klaus Toepfer, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme. "Millions more are in bad health and trapped in poverty, much of their energy and time wasted in the quest for clean water."

Source: *WaterInfoCenter.com*, March 25, 2002.



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to be faced squarely with responsibility and accountability.

The response of governments to this need for increased supplies of pure water undoubtedly will include more regulation. Increased regulation usually means increased costs, and there will be constant prolonged debate between increasing the cost of providing safe drinking water by additional regulations and consumer demand and the consumer's willingness to bear the price. For example, the debate over reducing the maximum contaminant level for arsenic lasted more than 20 years before the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finally announced a new standard. Political delays are understandable, but delays in providing safe drinking to the population are inexcusable. As a result, the government will need to rely on the private sector to deal with this issue.

In the future, nature's ability to provide sufficient fresh water will depend largely on our ability to protect and nurture what is essential for this to happen. The government's role should be the implementation and enforcement of strong regulations for the protection of the remaining water resources, while the POU industry should take on even more of the responsibility for providing safe drinking water for the consumer.

Solution

Substantiated real claims for sustainable and reliable contaminant removal do not

completely meet the needs of dealers and customers. Convenience also is important. A complete drinking water system needs to eliminate complicated technical considerations of operation and maintenance from the dealer down to the customer level. Time, labor and costs associated with service and maintenance needs to be reduced to an absolute minimum. Of course, end users need assurance of fresh pure drinking water. But dealers and customers also need assurance of hassle free service and maintenance. The elimination of direct and indirect time, labor and costs associated with service and maintenance will generate higher profit margins.

It is important for companies and dealers to keep up with needs and trends. It is obvious that the responsibility and accountability of the POU industry will become more important as we move into the future. The companies that will emerge as leaders in the POU industry will be those that offer high-quality products that respond to the growing awareness of the need for pure water as well as to dealer, customer and consumer needs. **WQP**

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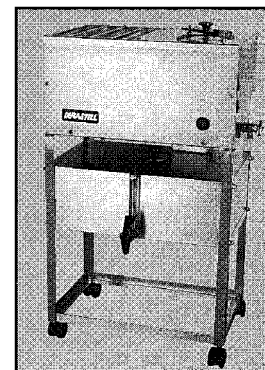
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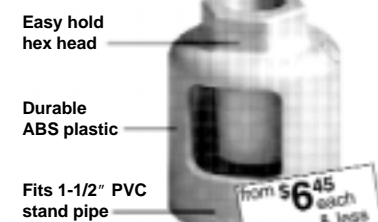
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