

Water - lots of drops to drink

Garrett says city may consider buying machine

By Fanny S. Chirinos Caller-Times

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George Gongora/Caller-Times

With the push of a button from the HP 120-DRU, the plastic cup filled with water. Mayor Henry Garrett took a sip and gave it thumbs up.

The machine - the AquaMagic High-performance 120 Disaster Response Unit - pulls moisture from the air, filters it and stores it until it's ready for use.

The company is marketing the units as first-response equipment to 183 cities along the Gulf and East coasts, cities at risk during hurricane season. Friday's stop in Corpus Christi will be followed in the next week by other stops between here and New Orleans.

Mayor Henry Garrett tries out the HP 120-DRU, a machine that extracts water from moisture in the air, cleans it and stores up to 130 gallons. Garrett tasted the water and declared it to pass his taste test. Watching from the sidelines are David Richards (in background) and Jonathan Wright (right), both with the AquaMagic company that makes the machine.

AquaMagic HP 120-DRU

- High-performance 120 Disaster Response Unit
- Weight: about 3,500 pounds
- Cost: \$35,000-\$38,000
- Makes 120 gallons/day
- Stores 130 gallons
- A full tank stores about 1,000 16-oz. servings
- Dimensions are 10' long, 5' wide and 3' high
- Water produced as pure as bottled water
- Features a Cummings engine

Source: Jonathan Wright, co-inventor of AquaMagic units

"These units can be used in an emergency situation or during special events," Garrett said. "I can think of several events where we could have used them. It's got a lot of possibilities."

The mobile unit is 10 feet long, five feet wide and three feet tall and weighs about 3,500 pounds. Its power comes from a Cummins diesel engine but it also can run off electricity. It costs between \$35,000 and \$38,000 depending on options and model type.

Jonathan Wright, co-inventor of the unit, said it was invented after seeing the survivors of the 2004 tsunami in Asia and 2005's Hurricane Katrina who were dying from lack of drinking water.

Wright said. "This unit can be driven or airlifted anywhere and make water on the spot," Wright said. "We also have a more rugged model for military use. It's a great benefit to first responders because it makes water without having to dig a well or lay down pipes."

The unit also adheres to standards required by the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and the World Health Organization, Wright said.

Of the inorganic metal chemicals such as aluminum, copper, iron and lead naturally found in water, all but zinc are found in non-detectable quantities in water treated by the machine, according to AquaMagic.

"It's cleaner than the city's tap water," Wright said.

Although Garrett said the city could find multiple uses for the machine, he would not say if he wants the city to buy one, which Wright said could be built in as little as 60 days.

"We're talking about \$35,000 per unit and that's a lot of money," Garrett said. "We'll have to think hard on it and figure out if we'll get more from it than we'll have to put in."