

Army takes 'miracle water' to 'Sendong' victims

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan Philippine Daily Inquirer - 2:06 am / Saturday, December 31st, 2011

TYPHOON "SENDONG" Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines



MANILA, Philippines—Philippine Army engineers have brought “miracle water” to flash-flood victims in Cagayan de Oro City and Iligan City by setting up water purifying machines that can produce thousands of gallons of potable water from murky river water.

Potable water remains scarce in the two cities since the overnight flash floods of Dec. 16 destroyed pipelines that would reportedly take months to restore.

The water purifying machines were loaned by the United States Marine Corps Forces Pacific Experimentation Center. Army engineers, with the help of the Armed Forces of the Philippines National Development Support Command (Nadescom) and the Army's 4th Infantry Division (4ID) based in Cagayan de Oro on Thursday installed the machines that were immediately operational.

According to the Army, the Aspen 2000 model can purify 2,000 gallons of untreated water or 1,800 gallons of salt water in one day. The Aspen 5500 model meanwhile can purify 5,000 gallons of untreated water daily.

The machines are run by electricity. They have built-in rechargeable batteries that can run for three hours at a time. Since power has not been restored in Barangay Hinaplanon, the soldiers use diesel-fueled generators to run the machines. Water purifiers were also set up in Sitio Tibasak, Barangay Macasandig and Barangay Patag, both in Cagayan de Oro, and Barangay Hinaplanon in Iligan.

The treated water is given free to residents who may fetch water at any time of day. The system operates 24 hours daily.

1st Lt. Dennis Martinez of the 52nd Engineering Brigade, who led the soldiers who installed two water-purifying machines in Barangay Macasandig, said hundreds of villagers lined up to get water. 1st Lt. Joshua Lim of the 51st Engineering Brigade, said the people were initially hesitant to drink the processed water that was taken from the murky waters of a nearby river. “Watching the purification process closely, they were amazed to see that a miracle happened when the brownish-colored water taken from the river turned into safe drinking water,” he said.

To assure residents that the processed water was safe, the soldiers and community leaders themselves drank it. Soldiers at the forefront of search and relief operations will not get a break to celebrate New Year's. Maj. Gen. Victor Felix, 4ID commander, said they would continue to serve the residents of Cagayan de Oro even during New Year's eve.

Information Provided by: **ASPEN WATER, INC.**

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