

Serious bottle

The Lifesaver bottle is designed to provide clean, safe drinking water in any situation, says Henrietta Thompson

WHAT IT IS

The lack of clean drinking water is a huge problem around the world. While there have been numerous inventions aimed at tackling it, the Lifesaver bottle is the most recent and most exciting. Its all-in-one ultra filtration system works to remove viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and all other waterborne pathogens. And it does so without the aid of foul-tasting chemicals such as iodine or chlorine, creating safe, sterile drinking water instantly. It also has a facility that shuts the system off when the cartridge has expired, protecting users from contamination, and at the same time ensuring they get maximum life out of the product.

The hope is that the bottle will have a significant impact on humanitarian and disaster relief operations worldwide, rendering local sources of water safe to drink, reducing the onset and spread of diseases and reducing the logistical support required when responding to events.

WHO HE IS

Michael Pritchard, 40, began his business career selling Apple computers into the then fledgling desktop publishing market. He stayed in the computer industry for a decade before moving to work in the City as business

development director for the Wace Group. A serial entrepreneur, Pritchard started his own business in 2000 – a specialist water treatment and legionella risk assessment company called Hydronic Solutions. He is now CEO of Lifesaver Systems, developer of the new bottle.

HOW HE THOUGHT OF IT

Pritchard set out to develop the Lifesaver after recent world events left him determined to make a difference. "After I saw the tragic waste of life and serious problems caused by the lack of safe drinking water in the wake of the tsunami in December 2004 and then again in August 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana, I felt that something had to be done," he recalls. "It took a little while and some very frustrating prototypes, but eventually I did it."

Various constraints were important in the design of the bottle. "I believe that you should be able to see what a product does just by looking at it," Pritchard explains. "The bottle needs to be able to hold a reasonable amount of water and have easy-to-use 'fill, pump, drink' instructions." These are graphic instructions developed by Pritchard that can be read by anyone anywhere, regardless of the language they speak. "My challenges were to



shrink down what is being used in industry at the moment to a portable individual size using no power or chemicals," he says. "I overcame my problems with lots of persistence, lots of prototypes and lots of broken pieces."

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The Lifesaver won Best Technological Development for Future Soldier System Enhancement by Soldier Technology 2007 for its potential to "reduce carried weight for the soldier and lessen the traditional logistical demands of drinking water faced by militaries around the world." Pritchard says there are already agreements signed for the UK Ministry of Defence and for US distribution. "Now our products are on sale via our website, we're being swamped with distributor enquiries," he says. "The bottle is made in and sent from the UK."

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Michael Pritchard with his award-winning design

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