



Joe Gingras (Mi Jackson, MI), left, with David and Cathy Wamsley as they pick up some donated Mi water to deliver to Flint.



This Mi Chicago DC team of (L-R) Antoine Hunter, Wilbert Washington, Gene Barajas, and Jerry Spillane prepared the pallets of Mi water and arranged for their shipment to Mi Jackson, MI.

Flint Water Crisis: Mi and Gerdau get some Water Flowing

One might think of a lack of clean, running water as an unfortunate yet common third-world country issue, so it could be considered implausible that such a tragedy can happen and continue for multiple years in any location within the United States – but it has.

Updates of the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, have appeared continuously in the mainstream news ever since it was revealed that high levels of lead were found in the water supply after the city switched to an interim water source almost two years ago. The switch was made in the effort to save money until a new water supply line to Lake Huron was complete. This decision backfired when the water from the temporary source caused corrosion in the existing distribution pipes, exposing lead to thousands of Flint citizens – including an estimated 6,000 - 12,000 children.

Getting involved

One of Mi Jackson, Michigan's long-term customers, Gerdau wanted to assist a local charity that was collecting bottled water for crisis relief and asked the branch for help. Mi's account representative for Gerdau, Joe Gingras (Mi Jackson, MI), with recommendation from Kyle Tordi (Mi Jackson, MI) reached out to Mi headquarters in Birmingham to see what could be done.

Management's decision to help was immediate. Phillip Deason (Mi DC Operations, Birmingham, AL) contacted Jerry Spillane (Mi Chicago DC) with the request to send four pallets of Mi bottled water to the branch in Jackson to donate to the cause. Mi Chicago DC staff members Gene Barajas, Antoine Hunter, and Wilbert Washington worked together to pull the four pallets (ending up filling a partial fifth pallet) from DC inventory and send out via truck line to the Mi Jackson branch.

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Delivery in Michigan

The water pallets made it safely to Mi Jackson, and soon a couple charity volunteers came to pick them up. Just before stopping at the Mi branch, they had collected donated water from local schools, so were only able to fit one (of the five) Mi pallets at that time. They came back for the next four a week later.

"They were very happy and there were many 'God bless yous' all over," said Joe. "They had brought a U-Haul and then transported the water to a couple of fire stations in Flint, about 90 miles from Jackson one way. The police and firefighters were all involved. Water is collected at the fire stations, then public service workers distribute it to minimize conflict. It's been moving very smoothly, but this problem will be around for a couple of years – maybe longer."

Joe also commented that Gerdau was "very pleased; they thought they might get one (pallet), but got five. And the people of Flint are so appreciative of all the water that everyone has donated."

"Motion's always willing to help when there is a catastrophe," said Jerry. "Whether it be employees or complete strangers. Employees are happy we did it. We feel good about getting product to customers, but sending something like this, it makes you go home feeling really good."

A combination of government aid and private donations of funds and supplies, particularly filters and bottled water, are helping to keep the city afloat as this disaster is being otherwise addressed. The result of the public- and private-sector teams working together is always greater than the sum of its parts, and Mi was glad to contribute to the extensive crisis relief efforts.

Thank you to Joe and Jerry for sharing your experience, and to Gerdau and all involved for contributing to help the citizens of Flint during this unfortunate catastrophe.