Amid Water Crisis, Walmart and Comcast Provide Relief for Flint, Mich. Residents

By Liz Roach [1]

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Like many observers, Comcast and Walmart leaders were stunned by the news of the water crisis in Flint, Mich.

Two years ago, the city switched its water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint River and the new source was highly corrosive and wasn’t properly treated to prevent dangerously high levels of lead from seeping into the water supply. A neurotoxin with hazardous effects on the brain and the body, lead is particularly harmful to children.

Walmart, which employs approximately 1,000 people in Flint, wanted to help. Executives asked themselves what would be the most effective and far-reaching way to aid the most vulnerable population in the community: the children. What, they wondered, would be the best strategy to issue bottled water that would reach the most critical density of children?

Officials quickly settled on schools as a distribution point. In collaboration with Coca-Cola, Nestle and Pepsi, Walmart is dispensing 6.5 million bottles of water to students. This will provide safe drinking water for 10,000 young people. They are using the delivery network that is currently in place at schools to issue the supplies.

"At Walmart, we take pride in using our strengths to help communities like Flint during times of crisis, as we’ve done around the world in times of need,” said Dan Bartlett, executive vice president of corporate affairs for Walmart. “We’re working to ensure that the children of Flint, the city’s most vulnerable citizens, have access to safe water.”

With 58 employees and thousands of customers impacted, Comcast’s presence in the community is also significant. In response, company leaders took action and implemented a multi-tiered plan to aid residents.

Presently, technicians are carrying state-provided water filters on their trucks and offering them to customers during home visits. Employees are handing out water filters from the local service center. In addition, Comcast has created public service announcements with information on resources and an “On Demand” feature on television that includes a video explaining how to install the filters.

Comcast is holding a bottled water drive in Michigan, with techs delivering the donations directly to Flint. The company also has opened up access to their Wi-Fi hotspots in the area for emergency personnel and volunteers to ensure that people receive the vital information they need.

"Part of what makes Comcast such a special place to work is our employees’ unwavering
commitment to their communities,” said Tim Collins, senior vice president for the Heartland Region at Comcast. “When our communities need us the most, Comacters rise to the occasion to make a difference. We’ll continue to look for opportunities to help out in Flint.”

As problems persist, Comcast and Walmart will continue to assist the Flint community.

Walmart encourages others to show support for Flint through Good360 [2], which provides a space for nonprofits in the community to list their needs online.

To learn more about Comcast’s philanthropic initiatives, please visit [3].

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