

MASADI @ NATICK helps Lighthouse

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These search terms have been highlighted: defense supply center hydration systems

# Horizons

Winter 2004



## Product Spotlight: Alpha Hydration System

Building upon our longstanding production of canteens for the military, the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind has recently developed a new line of **hydration systems**. These products feature 100 and 120 oz. water reservoirs carried backpack style, equipped with bite valves and drinking tubes allowing soldiers to stay hydrated while on the march. The Alpha **hydration** system stands out as the most popular item in this line. "What makes the Alpha unique is being rigid enough to keep its shape, but flexible enough to mold to a person's

back," says Norm Slader, director of engineering services.

According to Norm, **hydration systems** have come a long way since the first prototypes, IV bags in socks with tubes attached. Commercial **hydration systems** have become big business with hikers, bikers and the military. The Lighthouse team felt they could improve on the commercial **hydration** lines already being purchased by the armed forces.

During conversations with the Natick Research, Development and Engineering Center (NRDEC), the Lighthouse engineering team proposed developing a new **hydration** system design. Norm credits Roger Masadi of NRDEC with helping to spearhead the project.

"They were aware there were some problems associated with commercial **systems**," Norm reveals. "People would fall on the packs and they would break." The commercial **systems** are also difficult to dry out. "After a while you start to get mildew," he adds.

Norm and his team had three primary objectives in creating the Alpha **hydration** system. The product must be strong and durable, easily cleaned and hygienic. Initial testing proved that the **systems** met the primary design objectives and the Alpha went up for sale in the military base store market.

The Lighthouse currently supplies **hydration systems** to military base service centers around the country. Initial sales figures indicate strong demand for **hydration systems** in general and the Alpha unit in particular. Norm reports that of 9700 **hydration systems** sold in the fiscal year ending September 2003, 6100 were the Alpha model.

The Lighthouse is now working hard to make a Lighthouse **hydration system** the standard military issue item under the Javits Wagner O'Day Act (JWOD). The JWOD Program creates jobs and training opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, mainly through requiring federal agencies to purchase specific products from nonprofit agencies employing disabled individuals. Approximately 100 Lighthouse employees who are blind, Deaf-Blind and blind with developmental disabilities work directly in producing quality products for federal agencies under JWOD. Five of these individuals are employed on the Alpha **hydration** line.

The development of the Alpha **hydration system** helped establish the Lighthouse as a credible, capable development partner with NRDEC. This is key to our efforts to **supply hydration systems** designed expressly for the military. "What we want to do, ultimately, is **supply hydration systems** to the Department of Defense the same way we **supply** them with canteens," Norm says. The Lighthouse already supplies the military with all of its one and two quart hard canteens under JWOD. As sales of **hydration systems** grow, the Lighthouse will create additional job opportunities for blind individuals

The Lighthouse team is proud to have developed this innovative **hydration system**. The Alpha is "an item with features that other commercial **systems** don't have. It's easy to fill, easy to clean, easy to dry out and easy to take care of," Norm concludes.

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