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As in Albania, Durham firm heads to Turkey to clean water

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The Durham firm that spearheaded water-purification work in an Albanian refugee camp is gearing up for a similar job in earthquake-ravaged Turkey. "I always keep a bag packed," said Dr. Roddy Tempest, Chairman and chief executive officer of Tempest Environmental Systems Inc.

Today, Dr. Tempest expects to depart for Turkey to join a company emergency-response team already there. Vital water-cleansing equipment will follow and should be in place by Tuesday, he said.

Dr. Tempest and Keith Gibbs, an environmental specialist with the firm, said the situation in Turkey will present problems far different and much greater than those in Albania. "It will be a much more extensive operation affecting a lot more people," Gibbs said.

The water purification challenge in Albania was removing salt. In Turkey, it will be cleansing fresh water carrying disease-causing germs. "That is our first concern," Gibbs said.

Three mechanical filtration machines, each 6 feet by 6 feet by 10 feet, will do the job, Gibbs said. Each will produce about 144,000 gallons of safe drinking water a day. The total daily output of 432,000 gallons should be enough for about 350,000 people, Tempest said.



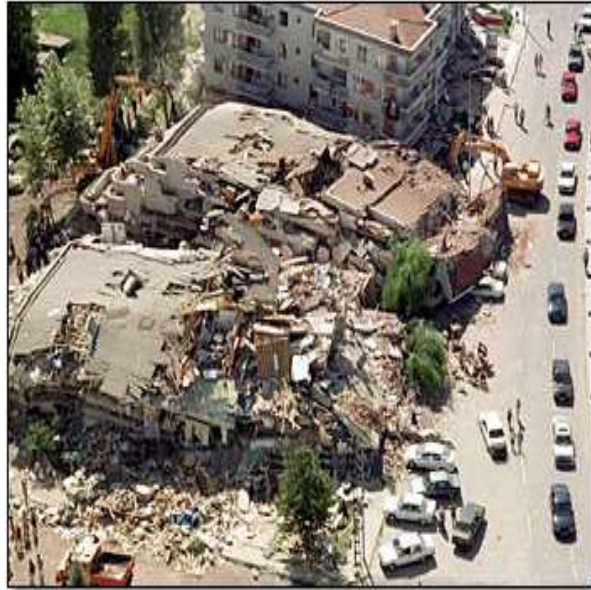
Medical facilities are set up on the street

Quick action is vital because contamination can occur in just 36 hours as waste water from shattered sewer pipes seeps into damaged drinking water systems. "Eighty percent of diseases are water-borne," Tempest said.

The Turkey earthquake, which hit in the early morning hours there on Tuesday, is already being ranked as one of the century's worst, second in strength only to the San Francisco quake of 1906. More than 10,000 people are dead, with thousands more missing under mountains of rubble. Chances of their survival dim with each passing hour.

As in Albania, The Tempest team will work closely with U.S. troops sent to the scene. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the U.S. Agency for International Development contacted the firm. Gibbs said the company is sending three people: Dr. Roddy Tempest, who will be the primary consultant; a field engineer to locate and test water sources; and a commissioning engineer to set up the equipment.

In Albania, the Tempest firm worked in American-built Camp Hope to provide water to refugees from Kosovo. The purification system, using water from a river 10 miles away, served 20,000 refugees.



Earthquake damage in Izmit rivals damage caused by the 1906 San Francisco quake