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Eubizz Water's customized filtering systems are installed in 10-, 20- or 40-foot containers and can recycle up to 95 percent of wastewater, says partner Terje Hilde.

Startup company brings wastewater purification

Eubizz has high hopes for its stand-alone filtration units in Lat Am

BY **BRONSON PETTITT**
The News

Feature

Purification and bottled water have been big business in Mexico for decades, but one company hopes to enter with an alternative that may change how water is used.

Eubizz Water, a small Norwegian company, has attracted interest in Mexico and several Central American countries with its self-contained water purification systems. Although the technology the systems use is nothing new, the way it is applied is unique, says Terje Hilde, who is heading operations in Latin America.

Since they are self-contained, the 10-, 20- or 40-foot Swedish-designed systems can be installed nearly anywhere – Eubizz airlifted a system to a remote Norwegian island a few years ago whose 120 residents had E. Coli in their drinking water.

Hilde sees a bright future in the

containers since they recycle as much as 95 percent of wastewater. The National Water Commission reported in 2006 that only a third of the country's wastewater is purified.

Hilde and Eubizz partners Oystein Bruland and Jens Amundsen met with clients in Mexico City last month to promote the systems. Hospitals, large department stores, malls, factories and housing subdivisions in four states and the Federal District have already indicated strong interest in the technology.

“Demand for clean water is everywhere and we're running out of it,” said

Hilde, a Norwegian native who lives in Mexico and has experienced water shortages of his own.

By purifying wastewater, the systems allow companies to be more independent of water supply and therefore less sensitive to water shortages, he said. Reservoirs providing water to the Mexico City metropolis have been diminishing this year in part due to less frequent rain. Last week, **Conagua** be-

gan cutting water supply between 10 and 50 percent to most of the city's boroughs and a dozen municipalities in the State of Mexico, which will be affected by the cuts for the rest of the year.

LOCAL HELP

Assembled in China, the systems use ultraviolet rays, reverse osmosis, ultrafiltration and nanofiltration among other technologies, and have a chlorine backup if any of the other techniques fail.

The systems can filter as much as 100,000 liters of any kind of contaminated water, including salt water, for drinking or industrial uses, Hilde said. For larger projects, the systems can be doubled up.

“This is cost savings for any factory, not to speak of the environmental benefit,” Bruland said.

Although Eubizz can check the systems' operational status on the Internet, with plans to install webcams inside the containers, local companies are needed to make sure the systems



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are functioning properly and haul filtered contaminants away.

That's where Manuel Avila Argu-mosa comes in. The director of International Environmental Protection (Proamsa) in Mexico coordinates local mechanics and electricians to install and maintain the systems.

"The systems are very efficient," he said. They require maintenance about twice a year, and the minimal waste created during filtering is hauled away

and properly disposed of, Avila said.

Andreas Baudrexel, General Director of Grupo Proyect, an industrial construction company in Central America, says that the Guatemalan Government is ordering industries to

become more efficient with water consumption over the next year.

"Right now, we're focusing on going to those businesses and presenting them the services and beginning to work together with them," Baudrexel said.

A melon plantation in Guatemala has already signed on to filter water for its workers, says Baudrexel, who is coordinating installation and maintenance of Eubizz' systems.

With several years of experience in setting up filtration systems, Baudrexel says the advantage is the lack of infrastructure needed -- instead of tanks, pumping units, filtration pools, he can connect pipes for the in and out flow to

the container and the "plug and play" system is ready.

The company has had success in China, where it installed systems at an industrial park, in villages where an earthquake contaminated the drinking water and on the polluted Lake Tai, China's third-largest freshwater body that provides water to some 30 million people. Eubizz has also filtered drinking water for several villages in Norway.

As Eubizz turns its focus to Latin America, the hardest part, the partners agreed, is gaining trust in this relatively new idea.

Unlike installing the systems, "you can't build a reputation overnight," Hilde said.



The units filter water for villages (pictured, in Norway), factories and shopping malls.