

# Tire industry rushes to provide Haiti aid

By Kathy McCarron

Tire Business staff

AKRON—When an earthquake of 7.0 magnitude devastated Haiti Jan. 12, its effects hit close to home for at least a couple of tire dealers in Florida.

Andy Martino, president of Martino Tire Co. in Miami, was born in Haiti, and Patrick Assali, co-owner of Deal Tire & Wheel in Medley, Fla., grew up in Haiti, where his father still lives. Their family members still living in the poverty-stricken nation survived the disaster.

Both men and their companies have collaborated, along with Hercules Tire & Rubber Co.'s Tire Dealers' Warehouse, to collect food and supplies at Martino Tire's 14 stores in southern Florida to ship to Haiti.

They join others in the tire industry who are doing their part to help earthquake victims.

"Having grown up in Haiti, I felt helpless...You look at how the people are living...

I feel very frustrated," Mr. Assali said. Communication with his father in Haiti has been sporadic due to the damage to the communications network. His father is sometimes able to call out on the telephone, but mostly communication is handled via e-mails, he said.



Deal Tire & Wheel photo

Deal Tire & Wheel has been using its delivery trucks to collect donated food and supplies from Martino Tire in Florida.

Mr. Assali sent out an e-mail plea to customers and acquaintances to donate to charities or participate in the Martino Tire collection. His sister has been coordinating the collection with Martino Tire.

Deal Tire has been using its 16 delivery trucks to visit the Martino stores in the afternoons, after they've finished their deliveries, to load up the donations and store them at the local Deal Tire warehouse.

When Mr. Assali spoke to *Tire Business*, one of the stores already had collected enough supplies from the community to fill a 16-foot box truck.

Hercules' TDW warehouse also has been lending the use of its trucks to collect the donations from Martino Tire. Rocky McDonough, regional manager for the Southeast, said Hercules has donated monetarily to Haiti relief efforts and has been encouraging its wholesale customers to donate to the cause, as well as offering to help coordinate pickup and

delivery of donations.

The Martino Tire collection drive also received some publicity through the local media, Mr. Martino said.

As of Jan. 23, the Martino Tire stores had collected enough bottled water, canned food, blankets, clothes and medical supplies to load a 30-foot shipping container that will be delivered by a relief organization to Haiti. Mr. Martino said he hopes to collect enough donations to fill another container.

Meanwhile Dunn Tire L.L.C. of Buffalo, N.Y., is donating \$5 for every tire sold through each of its 29 stores in western and central New York and northern Pennsylvania through Feb. 14. The donations will be given to Hands On Disaster Response Organization.

Dunn Tire also is offering a free New York State vehicle safety inspection or \$10 off a Pennsylvania State vehicle inspection to customers who donate \$10 or more for Haiti re-

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