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China Spring VFD seizes opportunity to enhance capabilities

CHINA SPRING, Texas — A transformed military vehicle is giving China Spring Volunteer Fire Department extra firefighting power.

The department received a Stewart Stevenson 2.5-ton cargo truck through the Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program (DOD-FFP) and accepted a 100 percent grant for a slip-on unit through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program, both programs are administered by Texas A&M Forest Service.

The DOD-FFP stipulates that upon receipt, the department has 180 days to convert the truck into an emergency response vehicle and paint it a non-military color.

“We painted the truck, added emergency lighting, a radio, new railings and steps for easier access,” said China Spring VFD Fire Chief Scott Needler.

Since being established in 1957, the dedicated firefighters of the China Spring VFD have been committed to increasing the department’s capacity to save lives and property. The addition of the military apparatus will help strengthen their capability, creating a safer more efficient resource for firefighting.

“This Stewart Stevenson is replacing a F650 two-wheel-drive vehicle and is an upgrade for the department,” said Needler. “It has four-wheel-drive which will give us easier accessibility to fires that are in rough terrain or pastures and farm land. This is also the first slip-on unit for our department. It has a 600-gallon water tank, 10-gallon foam tank and an 18 horsepower motor, basically making this truck a better all-around vehicle.”

A slip-on unit is a complete self-contained firefighting system designed for a pick-up truck or custom-built vehicle platform. It is used in wildland firefighting as well as structure and automobile fires. The addition of foam will help the water to go further because the foam coats the fuel and helps to extinguish the fire. The firefighter spreads a blanket of foam on the area involved, smothering the fire and decreasing the possibility of it reigniting.

Texas A&M Forest Service is committed to protecting lives and property through various fire department assistance programs. The Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program launched in Texas in 2005, is one such program and has released over 600 retired military trucks to volunteer fire departments across the state. The agency transports the vehicle from a military installation, performs necessary repairs and delivers it to the volunteer fire department at no cost to them. The Texas A&M Forest Service excess military equipment program is sponsored by the USDA Forest Service which also oversees the national program.

For more information on programs offered by Texas A&M Forest Service, please visit <http://texasfd.com>.

