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September 11, 2017

Eula VFD converts military truck into a firefighting machine

CLYDE, Texas — Eula Volunteer Fire Department received a \$20,000 grant from the Texas A&M Forest Service Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program. They used the grant to purchase a new slip-on unit and mounted it onto a 5-ton Stewart Stephenson military truck.

A slip-on unit is a complete, self-contained firefighting apparatus designed for a pickup truck or custom-built vehicle platform. It is intended to become a fast, initial-attack firefighting component used for wildland firefighting, structure and automobile fires.

“The new slip-on unit has a 1,000-gallon poly water tank that will help increase our capacity when responding to wildland fires,” said Eula VFD Assistant Chief Charlie Dawson. “Having a large volume of water will give the firefighters increased firefighting ability by allowing them to shuttle water to the farms, ranches and undeveloped areas that do not have access to fire hydrants.”

The Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program, overseen by the USDA Forest Service, provides excess military equipment to fire departments and emergency service providers. Launched in Texas in 2005, this program has released over 500 retired military trucks to volunteer fire departments across the state to help them better protect lives and property. Texas A&M Forest Service transports the vehicle from a military installation, performs necessary repairs and delivers it to the volunteer fire department at no cost to them.

Converting military vehicles into firefighting apparatus help departments attain rugged trucks with maximum off-road capability.

“The Stewart Stephenson is very tough and was built to maneuver the type of terrain that we have,” said Dawson. “It has an automatic transmission that is beneficial when fighting a wildland fire for hours. We no longer have to keep a foot on the clutch for long periods of time.”

The primary purpose of the truck will be wildland fires but it can also be used for structure fires and due to the height of the truck will be valuable for high water rescue.

Eula VFD Fire Chief Joe Arispe oversees the 18 member response team. The department was established in 1984 and has a 140 square mile protection area.

Texas A&M Forest Service is committed to protecting lives and property through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program, a cost-share program funded by Texas State Legislature and administered by Texas A&M Forest Service. This program provides funding to rural Volunteer Fire Departments for the acquisition of firefighting vehicles, fire and rescue equipment, protective clothing, dry-hydrants, computer systems and firefighter training.

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

