

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Converted military truck receives new assignment with Weesatche VFD

Weesatche, Texas — Weesatche Volunteer Fire Department converted a 2011 BMT 5-ton military cargo truck into a firefighting apparatus.

The excess military vehicle was awarded through the Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program (DoD FFP). The department also accepted a \$20,000 grant from the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program to purchase a slip-on unit that was installed onto the back of the truck. This program currently provides funding to rural volunteer fire departments for the acquisition of slip-on units for military vehicles, helping in their conversion into a firefighting apparatus. Both programs are administered by Texas A&M Forest Service.

“This truck will be an asset to our department because it can carry more water and was built for rugged terrain, making it useful as an off-road apparatus,” said Weesatche VFD Fire Chief Russell Bethke. “One of the stipulations for receiving the truck was that it had to be painted a non-military color, which we did, but we also added a skid plate in the front to protect the truck from brush and equipped it with emergency lighting, radio and a slip-on unit with 1,000-gallon water tank and a 10-gallon foam cell. The unit is also capable of drafting from a pond or a creek.”

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.

“We only have one fire hydrant in our town, so having the capability to carry a lot of water in addition to the foam is a great benefit,” said Bethke. “We have a lot of oil and gas in our area so we have a number of battery tank fires or large grass fires. The larger volume of water will allow the firefighters to fight fires longer creating a greater potential to knock the fire down quicker.”

This military truck, will be able to go into challenging areas, even when carrying 1,000 gallons of water.

“This will be a dual purpose vehicle if needed,” said Bethke. “It can be used for high water rescues or getting out into wildland areas with difficult terrain. We will be able to take it into places that our smaller tanker cannot go.”

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 500 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>.



Before



After