

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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West Mountain Volunteer Fire Department receives equipment grant

GILMER, Texas – Up-to-date equipment can improve safety procedures in times of response while protecting firefighters and public alike. West Mountain Volunteer Fire Department received a \$19,800 grant to help purchase several pieces of fire/rescue equipment.

“One of our major upgrades is six new radios with 25-channel frequencies,” said West Mountain VFD Fire Chief Steve Bayne. “Communication is the key to properly coordinating emergency response. It is essential for the safety of not only our department members but also when several departments are responding to an event it is essential in synchronizing teamwork among the responders, keeping everyone safe.”

From maneuvering down a dirt road or through a grassy field for wildland fire response to a rescue from a vehicle accident on the busy Texas Highway 271, West Mountain Volunteer Fire Department steps up to the increasing response demands.

“Nestled along a major US highway between the cities of Gladewater and Gilmer, and with an expanding population into a once rural area, the West Mountain Volunteer Fire Department is having to expand its capabilities,” said Texas A&M Forest Service Regional Fire Coordinator Josh Bardwell. “Wildfires and the occasional structure fire in their protection area historically has evolved into more rescues on the highways and mutual aid assistance to other VFDs in the county, along with more Wildland Urban Interface issues due to the population rise in the once agrarian community. To meet these challenges, the VFD has been upgrading their fleet, equipment and training to meet the needs of those they serve.”

The department also received scene lighting, rescue ropes and a thermal imaging camera.

“The new LED scene lighting is battery operated and can be used anywhere lighting is needed, if it is on a wildland fire or at the scene of a vehicle accident, at night it can light up the area to look like its daytime,” said Bayne. “We also received a thermal imaging camera and rescue ropes; both are very versatile and can be used in many different scenarios. The department members are already familiar with most of the new equipment but there are always different applications to be explored such as the many uses of the thermal imaging camera.”

West Mountain VFD has been serving their area since 1978 and has open enrollment for anyone who would like to volunteer and give back to the community. To request an application email westmtvfd1@gmail.com.

“Our department appreciates the support of Upshur ESD #1 and our community backing that helps meet departmental operational needs and Texas A&M Forest Service for having grant opportunities available to volunteer fire departments,” said Bayne.

As a member agency of the Texas A&M University System, Texas A&M Forest Service administers the Rural VFD Assistance Program and is committed to protecting lives, property and natural resources. The Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program is funded by Texas State Legislature and provides cost share 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>.

