

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Military vehicle assigned a new mission at Ata Bexar County Line Volunteer Fire Department

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Ata Bexar County Line Volunteer Fire Department converted a 1994 Stewart Stevenson 2.5-ton excess military vehicle into a firefighting machine thanks to an \$18,300 grant through the HB2604 Rural Volunteer Fire Department Program.

This Stewart Stevenson is one of over 700 excess military trucks that have been transferred at no cost to volunteer fire departments through the Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program. The apparatus will help build the department's fleet and increase their capacity to serve their community.

Both programs are administered by Texas A&M Forest Service

“The department members did the work for the truck conversion,” said Ata Bexar County Line VFD President and Chief Medical Officer William Lay. “One of the stipulations for receiving the truck was to paint it a nonmilitary color. We were able to fill that requirement thanks to donated paint. We also added lights, a siren and radio.”

Volunteer fire departments have a year to make the military vehicle ready for service. With those stipulations satisfied the rugged truck is titled to the VFD, becoming a permanent part of their fleet.

Knowing the various capabilities of an apparatus is important to rapid mobilization. Lay, like other VFD volunteers, has firsthand experience because of his service in the armed forces.

“Our response area is very sandy,” said Lay. “This type of truck was built for high performance in this type of terrain. The tire pressure can be changed to adapt to sandy soil, allowing quick response for wildland fires or to respond as a tender, hauling water.”

According to Lay, Fire Chief William Hammond and the department members appreciate the community's support that helped to make the conversion possible and the truck has already responded to four mutual aid calls.

The Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program was launched in Texas in 2005 as a program to help increase the capacity of Texas volunteer fire departments. In 2018 FEMA indicated that Texas is one of the top rated states where 84 percent of the fire service is provided by volunteer fire departments. The Texas A&M Forest Service excess military equipment program is sponsored by the USDA Forest Service which also oversees the national program.

The Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program funded by Texas State Legislature currently provides 100 percent funding up to \$20,000 for the acquisition of slip-on units that are to be installed onto excess military vehicles helping in their conversion into firefighting apparatus.

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

