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Itasca Volunteer Fire Department converts military truck into firefighting apparatus

ITASCA, Texas — To increase the capacity of their fleet, members of the Itasca Volunteer Fire Department have been transforming an excess military vehicle into a firefighting machine.

The 1990 BMY 5-ton cargo truck was awarded through the Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program along with a \$20,000 grant for a slip-on unit through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program, both programs administered through Texas A&M Forest Service.

“Our department provides fire service not only to our community but to a lot of farming and rural area and with that comes the likelihood of grass fires from farm equipment or domestic trash burning,” said Itasca VFD Fire Chief Cameron Offutt. “This 6-wheel-drive truck is amazing, giving us a tough apparatus to get out in difficult places before the fire can get out of hand.”

This new addition will fill a lot of roles for the department. Its main mission will be wildland fires but it will also be used as a tanker or for high water rescues and traffic control after a vehicle accident.

“The converted apparatus with its 1,000-gallon water tank and foam capability will be a great benefit to Itasca VFD,” said Matthew Schlaefer, Texas A&M Forest Service Regional Fire Coordinator. “The truck is in service and will be a valuable asset in the upcoming fire season.”

One of the stipulations when receiving an excess military truck is that it be painted a nonmilitary color and be service ready in 180 days.

“I would like to thank the community for helping fund the conversion and the City of Itasca for their support in the necessary welding that completed the truck,” said Offutt. “We painted the truck, added spot lighting, emergency lights and a radio. This really was a joint effort.”

Itasca VFD has been providing fire service since 1896. Anyone wishing to volunteer can pick up an application at the fire station, located at 110 West Monroe, any Monday night at 6 p.m.

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>.

