

Selah Fire Department Welcomes New Pumper Truck To Fleet

By Emily Goodell

After years of planning, waiting and searching, the Selah Fire Department has introduced its first new pumper truck in 15 years.

The new vehicle replaces the department's old 1989 pumper truck, which was out of compliance due to its open seating configuration. Now, the old truck will provide the department with a spare vehicle, which can be used to train recruits.

Selah Fire Chief Gary Hanna said the department started looking into acquiring a new pumper truck in 2014. The department didn't have money at the time to spend on major equipment purchases, but Hanna said former City Administrator David Kelly recognized the department's funding needs and encouraged the City Council to add a utility tax for police and fire vehicles.

Hanna said the Selah Fire Department is unique in that its funding comes from both the city of Selah and Yakima Valley Fire District 2. That means when the utility tax came into effect, YVFD 2 matched the funds from the utility tax, making it possible for the department to purchase a new truck.

Between 2015 and 2016, after the utility tax was implemented, the department used the extra funds to replace the 1984 pickups it had previously converted into brush trucks. The department purchased



The Selah Fire Department introduced its first new pumper truck in 15 years last month, replacing an outdated 1989 model truck that will be used for training.

four trucks over two years to use as dual-purpose vehicles.

Local Collaboration

The fire department worked with local company Cascade Fire and Safety to replace the truck. Cascade Fire and Safety President Mark Merritt said Hanna called him in late 2016, saying he needed to replace a 1989 fire truck. They then started looking at the price and what would be needed in a new truck.

"It was great because it meant the tax dollars stayed in town," Merritt said.

Hanna said the department tries to keep its money local when possible.



He said he considered companies in Spokane and Portland, but in February of last year, Cascade was the only company to submit a bid.

Merritt worked closely with Hanna, having regular meetings and sending photo updates to show the truck's progress. KME Fire Apparatus built the truck according to the specifications designed by Cascade Fire and Safety and delivered the truck in February.

The total price tag for the vehicle, loose equipment, taxes and other expenses was \$407,000.

"That money is an investment over the next 25 years the truck will be in service," Merritt said.

Cascade Fire and Safety's service department outfitted the pumper truck with new equipment, much of which they mounted. Merritt said being able to address the truck's service needs quickly is another benefit of working locally.

"If there are any maintenance issues, our office is 10 minutes away," Merritt said. "For the next 20 to 25 years the truck will be used,

there are service capabilities right here in town."

New Truck Benefits

Aside from being brand new, the pumper truck is different than the previous model in other ways. This pumper truck is the first to have all-new equipment. Hanna said the department usually outfits new vehicles with equipment from the older vehicles. In this case, the old pumper truck was using equipment from the 1960s.

In that vehicle, that equipment was often loose. But in the new truck, equipment is more organized and mounted on the side for easier access.

Merritt added that the new truck makes more efficient use of space. The 35-foot tall ladder is stored within the body of the vehicle. The truck also utilizes energy-saving LED lighting.

Hanna said this is the first truck the department owns with a pre-connected line mounted into the truck's bumper, which will allow firefighters to save time at a fire scene.

The department will continue to replace older equipment over the next couple of years. This year, the department is looking to replace its water tenders, and in 2019, Hanna said the department is looking at acquiring another water tender and command vehicle.

He added that he hopes his team can start using the new truck the week of March 19.

Ongoing Challenges

Hanna has been Selah's fire chief for 40 years, running the second-busiest volunteer fire department in the county. The Selah Fire Department covers 64 square miles and responded to 1,552 calls in 2017, or about four per day.

Hanna said despite the need, the fire department's operational budget remains tight and there are limited funds to expand the staff.

"The fire department will always struggle on the operational side," Hanna said. "It's up to the taxpayers to decide what an acceptable level of response is."

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