

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ralls VFD receives \$20,000 grant and a military vehicle for versatile emergency response

April 18, 2017 — Ralls, Texas — The Ralls Volunteer Fire Department received a Stewart Stevenson 2.5-ton cargo truck through the Department of Defense Firefighter property Program and a \$20,000 grant for a slip-on unit through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program, both programs administer through Texas A&M Forest Service.

Since being established in 1917, the dedicated firefighters of the Ralls VFD have been committed to increasing the department's capacity to save lives and property. The addition of a converted military apparatus will help strengthen their capability.

Though there was no cost to the department for the truck or slip-on unit, they were responsible for painting the truck a non-military color and making it service ready.

“Small departments like ours have a smaller tax base,” said Ralls VFD Fire Chief William Tidwell. “We raised funds for the conversion by having a pancake festival and also received donations to help finance the necessary additions to make the truck a multi-duty vehicle designed for most any type of emergency. The volunteers painted the truck, took the bed off and built new side boards before adding the slip-on unit that has a 480-gallon water tank and a 20-gallon foam tank. We did all the work ourselves.”

A slip-on unit is an apparatus built to meet the demands of the fire service and easily mounted in the back of a pickup truck or a custom-built platform. It can be used to transport water to rural areas that do not have adequate water supply. The foam that is mixed with the water helps to smother the flame, coat the fuel and guards against re-igniting.

“This truck is one of our front-line fire apparatus,” said Tidwell. “It is automatic and has four-wheel-drive and is capable of getting into the rural areas where the terrain is rough and water isn't readily available. We have already used it to fight a number of fires, high water rescues and mop-up after vehicle accidents.”

The Ralls VFD has a 345 square-mile response area plus mutual aid with other fire departments. Their Panhandle area has oil lines, ranching and farming. Cotton is one of the larger dollar crops grown there and during harvest season fires are more likely to occur. The cotton strippers overheat or the cotton modules burst into flames. Having a versatile fire apparatus to adequately keep up with the demands is crucial to the department and community.

Texas A&M Forest Service is committed to protecting lives and property through its various fire department assistance programs. For more information on programs offered by Texas A&M Forest Service, please visit <http://texasfd.com>.

