

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Jackson Heights Volunteer Fire Department prepares for high-water rescues**

TYLER, Texas — Jackson Heights Volunteer Fire Department added an excess military truck with a slip-on unit to their fleet. The height and ruggedness of the 6x6 cargo truck will help fill the need for a high-water rescue apparatus. The 1996 Stewart Stevenson was received through the Department of Defense (DoD) Firefighter Property Program and the slip-on unit was purchased thanks to a \$20,000 grant through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program.

“The rural community of Jackson Heights and the surrounding area will benefit from the fire department having this versatile engine that can tackle various emergencies from floods to wildfires,” said Josh Bardwell Texas A&M Forest Service Regional Fire Coordinator.

The truck will be equipped with life safety ropes, life jackets and wildland firefighting tools.

“Our department’s response area is varied,” said Jackson Heights VFD Fire Chief Michael Van Winkle. “We cover areas that are in the piney woods and valley areas that are prone to flooding.”

The Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program, overseen by the USDA Forest Service, offers excess military equipment to fire departments and emergency service providers. Launched in Texas in 2005, this program has released over 600 retired military trucks to volunteer fire departments across the state to help them better protect their communities. Texas A&M Forest Service transports the vehicle from a military installation, performs necessary repairs and delivers it to the volunteer fire department at no cost to them.

Acquired vehicles must be painted a nonmilitary color and transformed into an emergency response vehicle within 180 days after receiving it.

“Our first change to this truck was the addition of hand rails,” said Van Winkle. “We then painted the exterior of the truck with bed lining material to help extend the life of the paint and added the slip-on unit. The work was all done by department members with assistance from the Arp Future Farmers of America and the Emergency Service District’s mechanic shop.”

According to Van Winkle the slip-on unit’s 650-gallon water tank will allow the firefighters an increased quantity of water giving them more firefighting power and the addition of foam increases the effectiveness of the water by coating the fuel and smothering the fire.

Texas A&M Forest Service is committed to protecting lives and property throughout the state of Texas. The partnership with the USDA Forest Service helps fulfill this long standing commitment.

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

