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An excess military truck becomes an integral part of the Downsville VFD fleet

WACO, Texas — A new coat of paint and a slip-on unit gives Downsville Volunteer Fire Department's 2.5-ton excess military truck new life. The 1997 Stewart Stevenson will help to fill in the gap as a small brush truck, essential for wildland firefighting.

This truck is one of 700 that have been transferred at no cost to Texas volunteer fire departments through the Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program and the slip-on unit was purchased with a \$20,000 grant through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program.

Both programs are administered by Texas A&M Forest Service.

“The addition of a 500-gallon water tank and a 10-gallon internal foam system helps to make this truck conversion perfect for our department,” said VFD President Bryan Beavers. “We have needed this type of truck for a long time. It not only holds a large amount of water but can draft from a pool or pond when necessary and has foam capability essential to suppression operations.”

Downsville VFD's service area includes farm and ranch land.

“Since we are in the country, at times we may have to cross fields and ditches to get to a brush fire,” said Beavers. “This four wheel drive will allow us to get to those type of areas more easily.”

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, making this type of program of great value to those 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 a firefighting apparatus.

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

