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Fire department's new 'supertrucks' to roll in 2 weeks

By SHARON CARRASCO

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WINTER PARK — The city's two new prototype fire trucks that will combine firefighting and rescue calls should be in operation and on the streets in two weeks, said Fire Chief Sid Ballou.

Dubbed the "supertrucks," the rescue-pumpers that cost \$90,000 each were built at Emergency One Inc. in Ocala, said Ballou. They are now being serviced in Orlando.

The rescue-pumpers are scheduled to arrive in Winter Park by this weekend and should be in service within two weeks, said Ballou.

It will take a week to stock each truck with medical equipment and supplies, ladders and hose. When complete, each truck will have a 1,000-gallon-per-minute pressure and a 500-gallon booster tank.



Gordon Williamson/the little sentinel

Harold Lackey of Heintzelman's Truck Center checks under the hood of one of the the Winter Park supertrucks.

A special compartment for advanced life support will be built behind the cab, said Ballou. The trucks will be able to transport patients but only when Herndon Ambulance isn't able to respond.

"This was just a dream a few months ago and now it's a reality," said Ballou. "The supertrucks will mean better utilization of manpower."

Normally, fire departments have a pumper truck for responding to fire calls and a rescue vehicle for emergency medical calls, Ballou said.

The fire department's policy requires a rescue truck and pumper to respond to every rescue call,

which doubles fuel costs and maintenance and ties up two vehicles, said Assistant Fire Chief Mike Molthop, who designed the supertruck concept.

The rescue-pumper will mean fewer personnel while improving the response time and leaving another rescue truck ready to answer another call, Molthop said.

The two rescue-pumpers will decrease the fire department's vehicles from eight to six, said Ballou. One supertruck will be stationed at the west-side station; the other at the fire station on Lake-mont Avenue.