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# Report praises savings from new-style fire trucks

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SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

WINTER PARK — The city fire department's two new rescue-pumper trucks saved the city at least \$30,000 in 1982, according to a report prepared by assistant fire chief Mike Molthop.

Several Winter Park paramedics who use the trucks said they are a good compromise for the city but admitted that the trucks have limitations. And one Florida fire department that considered ordering one of the special trucks decided it was not practical for that city.

The concept of having both rescue and firefighting capabilities in one truck was developed by Molthop two years ago. The standard fire trucks have a cab behind the driver's cab which is equipped with advanced life-support equipment. The rescue cab is used only to transport patients to the hospital in an emergency; on most calls, Herndon Ambulance transports patients.

The trucks, at a cost of \$94,000 each, replaced two fire trucks and one emergency rescue vehicle in January 1982. Now the city sends a pumper-rescue truck on every emergency call instead of a fire truck and a rescue vehicle.

Please see TRUCKS, 8

## TRUCKS

From 1

Out of about 3,000 calls a year, the rescue part of the vehicle was used to take patients to the hospital only 40 or 50 times, Molthop said.

In 1981, the city spent \$36,127 on labor, parts and fuel for its 1961 and 1969 pumper trucks and one rescue truck, according to Molthop's report. In 1982, the two hybrid vehicles cost the city \$5,878 in labor, parts and fuel. In addition, the rescue-pumper trucks saved the city \$1,060 in insurance, the report said.

"There's been a lot of interest in these vehicles," Molthop said, citing letters he has received from fire stations as far away as Minnesota and Iowa.

Chris Lambert, deputy chief of fire suppression in Largo, was interested in ordering a similar truck and sent three men to look it over before he decided against it.

"The persons we sent there were impressed with it," he said. But, he added, the truck is "not applicable to us, by virtue of its size and other considerations."

Lambert said the truck, when used to take patients to the hospital, would take up too much hospital parking space. Also, he said, it would be awkward to maneuver a fire truck-size vehicle in and out of mobile home parks when answering calls.

Lambert said he thought the truck also might not be approved as an advance life-support system in Pinellas County. He said the truck's usefulness depended on the city's situation; with a dual response system, he said, "it may be very useful."

In Largo, the city finances the fire department and the county finances the emergency medical services program. "We can't afford the luxury (of a dual purpose truck) at this time," he said.

Winter Park paramedic Tim Highley said the rescue-pumper truck is "a good truck for our purposes."

But when it's used to transport patients, he said the size of the emergency cab can be awkward. "There's not enough room," he said.

Highley said that because of the way the stretcher is positioned, "you can't get behind the patient's head — it's hard to do anything there. Personally, I like regular ambulances because you can work better inside ... but we really don't need one," because Winter Park rarely has to transport patients, he said.

Highley also said there are problems when transporting because the firefighting equipment — boots and jackets — are usually thrown into the emergency cab, and when it is used for patient transport there's no place to put that equipment.

Paramedic Jeff Hudson, who joined the Winter Park department in October, said he would like to see four men on the truck instead of the three — two emergency medical technicians and one paramedic — who go out with it now. "If you have a code — which is a cardiac — you have three people on the scene instead of five," he said. "That slows down the process of getting the person ready to go to the hospital."

When the department was using two vehicles it had five people on the scene because the rescue vehicle was manned with two and the fire truck with three.

Paramedic Mike Love and Lt. Reed DeVault, who have been with the city for six and eight years respectively, both said they thought the trucks were a good compromise because they replaced two outdated pumper trucks and a rescue truck.

DeVault said the hybrid truck was not accepted by everyone. "The older guys don't like it because it's getting away from the old, heavy fire truck," he said, and the newer firefighters don't like it because it's not as maneuverable as a rescue vehicle.