



New fire engines 'perfect,' sergeant says

— By Daniel Silliman
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The fire department sergeant gets a bit breathless when talking about the new fire engine.

It's Sgt. Lars Kuhr's job to drive the engine and he knows every last feature on the Clayton County Fire Department's new truck. He points at the shiny new knobs, and when asked, lists all the functions, sounding like he's reciting a memorized spec sheet on the American LaFrance Metropolitan Crew Cab.

He says, "Look at this. I love this feature," and points at a flood light mounted on the side of the engine.

He says, "Look around and see all the extra room on it. It's really nice... This [cab], you've got beaucoup space. Not that you would lay down, but you could if you wanted to."

He says, "Oh yeah, look at this LED display here. I almost forgot this. This thing has so many bells and whistles, it's hard to remember them all."

He says, "This is my baby. It drives beautifully. It handles beautifully. This truck is excellent."

The white truck was parked inside Jonesboro's Station 13, on Tuesday. It had "Engine 13" written across the side in gold-colored paint and a polished, silver-colored decal reading "American LaFrance."

The truck is one of two new engines the Clayton County Fire Department purchased with this year's budget at a cost of \$306,970 each.

"They're replacement vehicles," says Deputy Chief Jeff Hood. "The other vehicles were showing some signs of wear and tear."

The two old trucks lasted more than 10 years, Hood said, which is considered a good run for an emergency vehicle. After a decade, the fire engine pumps start leaking, the water tanks start leaking, the mechanical repair costs start mounting and the bodies start rusting from all the water.

"These trucks run on wide-open," Hood said. "They're either sitting in the station or they're responding to an emergency, so that's hard on a vehicle. And it's very important that the trucks are in good operating condition, due to the fact that we always need to get the maximum capability out of them... On the other end of a pumper, there are fire fighters' lives at stake."

The new engines are expected to last 10 years, according to the deputy chief, but maybe longer because they have rust-proof, stainless steel bodies.

"State of the art," Hood said. "You get a long life out of the stainless steel body."

Kuhr finally has a single word to describe the new engine. After the sergeant talks about its 750-gallon water tank which can put water through a 1 3/4-inch hose for eight minutes, the 1,500 gallons-per-minute water pump, the increased storage space to keep everything organized, and the roller-doors to keep everything dry, he catches his breath.

"It's perfect," said Kuhr.

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Photos



Photo by Jeffrey Leo Clayton County Fire Sgt. Lars Kuhr explains the new digital relief valve monitoring system.