

QEM FPD HARNESSES TECHNOLOGY TO ADDRESS FIREFIGHTER AVAILABILITY



The QEM Fire Protection District in southern Jersey County recently was awarded a federal grant for \$652,500 to purchase a new 75-foot quint ladder apparatus.

QEM serves three municipalities and four townships in a 125 square mile district adjacent to the bluffs along the Mississippi River. While largely in a rural setting north of the St. Louis metropolitan area, the District protects a college campus, Principia College in Elsah, which has several multi-story buildings, and it faces increasing residential and commercial development in both the municipalities and unincorporated areas of the District, including multi-story condominiums. At the same time, QEM is an all volunteer district which, like fire protection districts in many parts of the state, faces difficulties in having sufficient personnel available at all times to respond to calls. Because of its rural and hilly location on the Mississippi bluffs, there are many narrow, steep and winding roads in the District, making negotiation of apparatus to incident scenes difficult, particularly with any type of high-rise equipment. With all of these factors in mind, Board Secretary-Treasurer David Pfeifer and Fire Chief Arno List were challenged to put together a grant application seeking funding for an apparatus which would meet all of these needs. With determination and passionate grant writing, however, they were successful in obtaining what may be the largest award in this year's federal grant program.

The district plans to purchase a Metz 75-foot ladder quint with the grant funding. Because of its shorter chassis wheelbase and powerful engine, this apparatus is capable of negotiating the hills, rural roads and close confines in which QEM's department frequently must operate. Essentially, the vehicle will be capable of going anywhere

that the District's current pumpers can reach while at the same time giving the department the ability to get on top of a fire with the ladder and quint. The District plans to use a foam system to extend the effectiveness of the water supply the truck will carry. An added feature is the 8,800 pound lifting capacity of the ladder which can be used for emergency storm debris removal and extrication incidents which would otherwise require heavy equipment to be brought in. Because of its location along 15 miles of the Mississippi River, the District also expects to use the ladder below grade for access to boats and from bridges for rescue and extrication.

Perhaps most importantly, however, the District wants an apparatus which would maximize firefighter safety while utilizing minimum personnel for quick set up and operation. One of the District's requirements for the apparatus is that it be self-leveling and have overrides to prevent operation in unsafe conditions while at the same time being operational with as few as two personnel. This will enable the District's department to respond effectively even at times when available fire department personnel may be at minimal operating levels.

QEM, which in the last few years has also completed construction of a new combination station/fire service training facility in cooperation with Lewis and Clark Community College including the only training fire tower facility in southwestern Illinois, plans to make its new apparatus available by mutual aid to fire departments throughout Jersey County and surrounding mutual aid locales.

Congratulations to QEM Fire Protection District! Movin' On Up! ■

Editor's Note: If you would like to have your District featured in the "Movin' On Up!" column of *The Fire Call* magazine, please contact us at 800-524-6620 for more information.