



By Jan Schultz

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Finishing touches are being made on a new quick-attack unit for Imperial's rural fire district that will greatly aid efforts in fighting grass fires.

Work on acquiring the unit has been underway by a fire department truck committee for about two years and, by the end of January, it should be in service, according Pete Dillan, president of the rural fire board.

Imperial Fire Chief Nick Schultz said when a few modifications to the unit are completed, the unit will be moved into service.

Quick-attack units are vital for fighting grass fires because they are smaller, faster and more maneuverable in rural situations, Schultz said.

"They can go places the big trucks can't, such as fires in trees, hills and canyons," he said.

It was important to the fire department, Schultz said, to use local businesses as much as possible for the truck's acquisition.

The 2014 Ford F-550 cab and chassis were purchased from Imperial Country Ford. The factory flatbed came from Chuck's Trailer Sales of Wauneta.

BT's Welding is completing the modifications to the flatbed and chassis to accommodate the fire apparatus. Imperial Auto will paint the unit's safety equipment. Its emergency lighting and radio system was purchased and installed by Prairie States Communications of Imperial.

The fire apparatus including the pump and 450-gallon water tank was acquired from Fyr-Tek in Gothenburg.

Cost of the unit was about \$88,000, with \$75,000 provided by the rural district and another \$13,000 from donations to the Imperial Volunteer Fire Department (IVFD). Members of the IVFD respond to fires both in the city of Imperial and the rural district.

The department's belief that another rural quick attack unit was needed was only reinforced by the summer 2012 grass fires that ravaged the state, Schultz noted.

This recent addition will be the second quick-attack truck in the rural department's fleet and has a bigger water tank at 450 gallons. Its other quick-attack unit holds 250 gallons.

The recent addition makes six rural firefighting units to be available for fighting rural fires, Schultz said. Added to those are the IVFD's command car and rescue unit, which are used for calls both in the city and rural district.

An agreement with the rural board allows all rural trucks to be used in fighting fires in the Imperial city limits, as well, joining forces with the city-owned 1,500-gallon pumper.

One problem created with the new quick-attack unit acquisition is space. Its housing in the fire hall has forced the IVFD's dive trailer unit to be moved off-site for storage, Schultz said.

The city and IVFD remain in negotiations with Chase County Schools on purchase of the Wellington St. football field for a possible future fire hall.

Monday's city council meeting includes two agenda items relating to that issue when council members discuss a proposal for advisory services for the fire hall's construction, as well as purchase of real estate.

