

Pumper problems: Godfrey Fire Protection District seeks solutions after flagship engine sent for repairs

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY - The newest engine in the Godfrey Fire Protection District's arsenal has been sent to Michigan for repairs - a process, which may take as long as four months.

Godfrey Fire Protection District Chief Erik Kambarian said the district's board of trustees had a special meeting Tuesday night to discuss what will be done after the 2009

Spartan pumper was sent to Michigan for massive repairs. The pumper's frame rails, which Kambarian compared to the keel of a ship, were covered in a powder coat to prevent corrosion. Unfortunately for firefighters, that powder coat began to peel, exposing the steel underneath and causing significant corrosion.

Needed repairs, which are estimated by Kambarian to be well in excess of \$30,000, will be conducted at the manufacturer's expense by Spartan Motors at their facility in Michigan. Once that pumper returns to active duty, it will have hot-dipped galvanized frame rails. Those repairs, however, require nearly the complete deconstruction of the entire vehicle, which is why there is a four month wait for its return.

In the meantime, Kambarian said his department is going to make due with two 1998 KME pumpers - one for each station. One of those pumpers, however, has been in reserve duty, and Kambarian said they behave like 20-year-old trucks often do.

"They have mechanical problems and failures we try to address proactively, but sometimes we have to address it reactively," he said. "They recently had quite a bit of mechanical work done to prepare them for frontline service. One typically serves as a reserve, and only goes into service when one is down for servicing."

To preserve those now-essential, 20-year-old pumpers, Kambarian said the board of trustees has decided to greatly restrict their usage. If it is not essential to life or property, those pumpers will remain at the station, he said.

In the future, Kambarian said the Godfrey Fire Protection Board of Trustees is looking towards securing a new pumper, but it requires a method of funding that. Kambarian said securing a new pumper was on Tuesday night's agenda, but was tabled at the time being. When applications are available again, he said the district may see a zero-interest loan from the State of Illinois, but those are not currently accepting applications.

Kambarian said the 2009 pumper will not be fully paid-off until 2029.

If one of the reserve pumpers suffers critical mechanical failure, Kambarian said the Godfrey Fire Protection District has several 24-hour service shops with road-mobile mechanics on the ready.

"The goal would be to get that truck back into service without delay," he said.

Other nearby fire departments have also been notified of the Godfrey Fire Protection District's current situation, and Kambarian said automatic mutual aid alarms and agreements may be expanded if one of the reserve pumpers shows signs of being mechanically unsound.

"We notified surrounding departments of the issue, and as expected, they said they are here to help," Kambarian said.