

The Queen City Responds

5 new apparatus provide a significant update to Allentown's fleet



By Bob Vaccaro

Allentown's new Engine 9 is built on a KME Severe Service chassis and features extra rescue compartmentation.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY KME

Many of us are familiar with the song "Allentown," written by Billy Joel in 1982. The song depicts the city of Allentown, Pa., as a blue-collar area suffering from the demise of the steel and manufacturing industry.

Today, Allentown, also known as "The Queen City," has gone through a resurgence. Although it recently lost the headquarters of Mack trucks (Allentown was at one time considered the fire truck capital of the world), it has added service industry jobs and still retains its blue-collar feel.

The Allentown Fire Department (AFD) has been part of this recent rebirth, adding three new KME engines and two KME mid-mount platforms in the last 2 years.

TRYING SOMETHING NEW

Prior to its most recent apparatus purchase, the AFD purchased apparatus every 5–6 years, which meant that it was still operating some apparatus purchased in the 1980s. "Three years ago, the administration decided to update our fleet by purchasing at least one new vehicle per year over several years," says AFD Chief Robert C. Scheirer.

The five apparatus the department added recently are paid for by tax dollars. "We haven't been fortunate to receive any vehicle acquisition grant money so far, even though we still continue to try each year," Scheirer says.

Pennsylvania uses the Co-Stars program, which

allows departments to bypass the competitive bidding stage as long as the manufacturer is listed in the program. "We looked at several manufacturers during the initial process," Scheirer says. "We decided on KME because it's only 40 minutes from us; as far as service and parts were concerned, we felt they had an advantage over other manufacturers because they were so close. They also had competitive pricing."

In addition, AFD members spoke with several other fire chiefs in the area to gain insight about dealing with KME. "Since this was our first time dealing with a new manufacturer, we wanted to make sure that we were making the right decision for this purchase and, if successful, many other purchases," Scheirer says.

DESIGNED TO MULTITASK

The AFD specs vehicles for a wide range of uses while also taking into consideration the specific needs of the response areas those vehicles will serve.

"All of our vehicles need to carry neighborhood-specific equipment and must have compartment space for that equipment," Scheirer says. "For example, we have the Lehigh River on the east and north sides of the city. The vehicles in that response area need to carry river and water-rescue equipment. We typically spec out the vehicles for their first-due areas."

The AFD's apparatus committee—which consists of Scheirer, the deputy chief of operations and several firefighters—looked at several KME vehicle and body designs before the purchase. "Our committee ▶

More on Allentown

The Allentown Fire Department consists of 140 firefighters staffing six fire stations with seven engines and two ladder trucks. In 2006, the AFD responded to more than 6,000 calls for assistance. Special Teams include hazmat, bomb squad, underwater recovery and technical rescue.

APPARATUS IDEAS

Truck 1 is a KME Severe Service 100' mid-mount platform.



Allentown New Delivery Specs

Engines 13 & 14

- Chassis: KME Severe Service XMFD
- Engine: 350-hp International MaxxForce 10
- Transmission: Allison EVS 3000
- Pump: 1,500-gpm Hale QMAX single-stage
- Tank: 750-gallon UPF poly
- Dimensions: 343" overall length; 175" wheelbase
- Generator: 6-kW Smart Power
- Firecom headsets
- Little Giant and Stokes basket storage low at rear of truck

Engine 9

- Chassis: KME Predator Severe Service XMFD
- Engine: 430-hp CAT C13
- Transmission: Allison EVS4000
- Pump: 1,500-gpm Hale QMAX
- Tank: 500-gallon fiberglass
- Body: 3/16" aluminum pumper
- Generator: 15-kW Harrison
- Hannay electric cord reel with 200 feet

of 220-volt cord

- Enclosed ladder storage
- Rear-vision camera system
- Code 3 warning-light package
- Firecom intercom system

Truck 1 & 2

- Chassis: Predator X-MFD with 12" raised-roof cab
- Engine: 500-hp Cummins ISM with brake
- Pump: 2,000-gpm Waterous S100 single-stage
- Tank: 300-gallon PolyIIE
- Body: Five-section mid-mount platform
- Dimensions: 578" overall length; 256" wheelbase; 128" overall height
- 1,000-lb. unrestricted platform load rating
- 12 tp +80 range of elevation
- Akron platform monitor
- IQAN motion-control system
- Proof load-tested with 3,000 lbs.

was originally put together for Engine 9. For Engines 13 and 14, we shopped around and looked at various body designs that would work for their response areas," Scheirer says.

Engine 9 is set up as a rescue engine that the AFD can use as a fire suppression engine as well for vehicle extrication and technical rescue. "We really can't afford to have a separate heavy-rescue company," Scheirer says. "Our department is kind of unique in that in addition to responding to fire and EMS runs, we're also responsible for hazmat, water rescue, technical rescue and the bomb squad." In other words, every vehicle must be able to perform multiple tasks.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The AFD made 10 factory visits during the production of the five vehicles. "The factory is only a 40-minute drive, which made it advantageous for us," Scheirer says. "KME has a great set-up. Everything flows smoothly through the factory from start to finish. We were able to see our vehicles built from the inside and out each time we visited."

The local KME dealer, Horrocks Fire and Rescue, is located in Collegetown, Pa. "They gave us great service before, during and after the sale," Scheirer says. "As with most apparatus purchases, we had some minor bugs to work out. The dealership could not have been more receptive to our needs, correcting anything ►

that went wrong. Not a week goes by without them giving us a call to ask how the vehicles are working out for us.”



Above: Engine 13 is a KME Severe Service engine with standard lower compartments and an extra can compartment.

Right: Engine 9 features high side compartments and a rear booster reel.



Due to their satisfaction with KME and the local dealer, the AFD is considering them for future purchases. If the budget process goes well, the department hopes to purchase another engine next year.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

The AFD’s satisfaction with its purchases is a direct result of the preplanning they put into designing the vehicles. As the chief mentioned, all of the department’s vehicles must be able to multitask. In this economy, that’s becoming more and more important.

In addition, all of Allentown’s apparatus are response-area specific. A great deal of planning went into the design of these vehicles to make sure they were functional for the task at hand as well as cost-effective.

The AFD also spent valuable time researching the manufacturers and talking with other customers to ensure that service after the sale would be sufficient—and as a result, they received excellent service throughout the process, from KME and the local dealer. Before you hand over your grant or tax money, find out how the local dealers in your area have treated other customers. ⚙️

Bob Vaccaro has more than 30 years of fire-service experience. He is a former chief of the Deer Park (N.Y.) Fire Department. Vaccaro has also worked for the Insurance Services Office, the New York Fire Patrol and several major commercial insurance companies as a senior loss-control consultant. Vaccaro is a life member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.