



Orcas protected by WASPs

Orcas Island – famous for whale spotting – needed a quick attack solution fleet of pumpers, but one that would comply with State Rating Bureau regulations. For two years Orcas Fire Department worked with Darley to find a solution and the unusual result is WASP, a new category of vehicle – the wildland attack structural protection vehicle.

Orcas Island, located in Washington State near the Canadian border, is the largest of the St Juan Islands. Not only are these islands of extreme natural beauty, being the world's premier whale watching spot, they also take centre-stage in history as the location for the last armed conflict between the UK and the US in 1859.

Over the years they have attracted many famous visitors and residents (including John Wayne), who have been charmed by the relaxed atmosphere and beautiful views.

The Orcas Island Fire Department consists of seven career firefighter/paramedics and 70 volunteers, and owns three Class A pumpers: one H&W and two Seagrave vehicles. However, it was found that this vehicle configuration didn't suit the response needs of the island. The main fire load on the mountainous island consists of high-end residential homes (wood); and access is often steep and narrow. In addition, most holiday resorts on Orcas Island have high fire flow requirements for sprinklers, and the district has poor water supply. At the same time the high turnover of volunteer staff makes training difficult.

Fire Chief of the Orcas Island FD, Mike Harris, contacted Darley dealer Edward Wright to discuss a suitable solution. Apart

from working for Darley, Edward is also a 25-year veteran in wildland and structural fire suppression, and a well-known college fire science instructor.

He worked with the Orcas Department for nearly two years, and travelled by ferry and plane to map out the optimal response solution.

Mike explained to Edward, that they required an easily manoeuvrable vehicle which was simple to operate while having high knock down capabilities. "Orcas originally only wanted small quick-attack trucks. However, such units would not be compliant with the State Rating Bureau regulations. Darley in its capacity as pump, foam system and vehicle builder was instrumental in delivering the final result; a pint-



sized Class A pumper using the Darley PSMC 1250, Darley AutoCAFS System and Polybilt body with integrated 300/25 water-foam co-polymer tanks."

Darley has delivered four units, one for each of the island's stations. The trucks are based on a Ford F-550 4X4 chassis, and were quickly named WASPs – wildland attack structural protection – by the fire department. Darley liked this style of thinking so much that it followed suit by making WASP the official name for the truck. "CAFS became the quick equaliser for quick knock-down, thus enabling a smaller chassis. The three-step CAFS activation with flow meters on each outlet have simplified training issues for the department.

"Orcas Island now carries out its first response by sending out one Class A water tender and one WASP to each incident. The units are equipped with front/rear mounted winches and are also used in paramedic rescue," comments Edward.

Another benefit is that this vehicle can flow foam from the front, simplifying operation on narrow and steep driveways. Edward adds that the units have already proven their worth by knocking down several residential fires in spite of access restrictions.

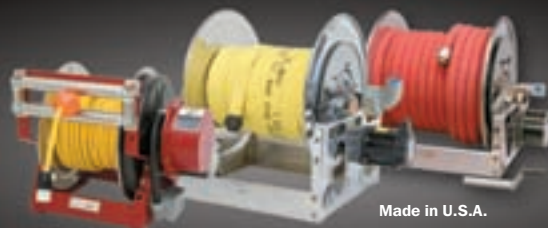
Chief Operating Officer for Darley, Peter Darley, comments further: "The choice for the Poly Body's was made because of its excellent impact and heat-resistant qualities and light weight. For instance, the material eliminates shock transfer through the body in the event of a collision, keeping damage to a minimum. Polybuilt bodies will not begin to deform until 300 or 400° F and their chemical resistance is second to none because they is easy to clean after exposure to hazardous chemicals."

The truck is fitted with an integral tank (so compartment space is ample) and because Polymer is so light, it enables the brigade to carry more equipment whilst keeping vehicle stability high.

Maintenance requirements are low due to the light material used for the body, its damage resistance, and its inherent corrosion resistance. "This naturally results in lower running costs and a lifetime of up to 40 years – with a low warranty – while still being re-mountable in a second life," continues Peter: "This truck has the capacity of a full sized pumper with a mini pumper foot print. We probably offer more types of CAFS than any other manufacturer in the world, and we are always looking at ways to simplify controls, improve performance and lower costs without compromising quality or service. There are various chassis and pump configurations available with this model, and what works for Orcas Island will make sense for many other fire departments."



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