

Tactical Support Units

by Battalion Chief John A. Calderone

During the late 1980s, the Department was faced with the prospect of replacing two aging floodlight trucks. A 1959 Mack was staffed by one firefighter 24 hours a day, but made only 56 responses during 1989. A 1961 International was used as a reserve unit.

Around the same time, demand for services other than actual firefighting increased dramatically. This was especially true for water rescues and structural collapses. Instead of purchasing two new floodlight trucks that probably would continue to be underemployed, multi-purpose vehicles were designed to provide fire-ground lighting, as well as carry special equipment for use at collapse, water rescue and other major emergency operations.

Both new units entered service on August 24, 1990. Tactical Support Unit 1 is quartered at 750 Main Street, Roosevelt Island, and Tactical Support Unit 2 is quartered at 1850 Clove Road, Staten Island. The new units quickly proved their worth. During their first month of operation, each Tactical Support Unit responded to more operations than the Searchlight Unit they replaced had rolled to in an entire year.

Currently, each Tactical Support Unit is staffed by one rescue-trained firefighter and responds to major emergency operations (10-60) (see *WNYF* 2nd/98, page 11), building collapses, confined space operations, water-related emergencies, high-rise fires (10-76), as part of the Hazardous Materials Response Group (see *WNYF*, 1st/99, page 6) and upon the transmission of a second alarm in its response area. They also can be special-called to any operation where the Incident Commander feels the unit can be of assistance.

The equipment carried on the two Tactical Support Units can be grouped into general areas, although some equipment is useful in many different situations. It should be noted that while the bulk of the equipment covered in this article is carried by both Tactical Support Units, there are minor deviations. Because of different response area characteristics, as well as the ingenuity of individual members who developed specific tools, there is some equipment carried by one unit and not the other.

If an Incident Commander is special-calling a Tactical Support Unit to use a specific piece of equipment, the dispatcher should verify that the specific equipment is carried by that

assigned Unit.

Water rescue equipment: Water rescue equipment carried by the Tactical Support Units includes an inflated, outboard-powered rescue boat that has through-the-floor entry for dive and recovery operations, an immersion suit, life vests, tether line, thermal recovery capsule for ice rescues, tide tables, throw ropes, Switlik rescue platform and sled.

Lighting and electrical

equipment: In addition to the mounted generator and light tower, there are portable lights, generator, a portable lighting cart known as the Kelly Kart (see *WNYF*, 3rd/98, page 5), reels with electric cable, various electrical connections, pigtailed and junction boxes, subway outlet adapters and lineman's gloves.

Hydraulic tools: The Stanley Tool System consists of a portable hydraulic generator that can power an assortment of tools, including a diamond chain saw capable of cutting concrete, stone or brick, cut-off saw, pavement breaker, impact wrench, chain saws, pole chain saw, a 400-gpm de-watering pump and hammer drill. All of these tools can be operated under water if necessary.

Collapse equipment: The Tactical Support Units carry a surveyor's transit to detect movement of unstable walls, a demolition hammer, a Pomeroy concrete core cutter (see *WNYF* 2nd/98, page 12) and a sound-detecting listening device. A portable air compressor also is carried for use with pneumatic tools carried by the rescue companies. This is especially useful at prolonged operations where numerous air cylinders otherwise would be required.

Haz-mat equipment: GX10 multi-gas detector meters, an over-pack drum lift, haz-mat guide book and an oil containment boom for spills on waterways are carried. Personnel assigned to the Tactical Support Units are trained to the haz-mat technician level.

Miscellaneous tools and equipment: A full range of carpenter's hand tools, sockets, wrenches, drills, skill saw, grinder, impact gun and right-angle drill are carried for use at emergency operations. Also carried are firefighting hand tools, SCBA, first-aid equipment and oxygen, night-vision binoculars, nylon slings, sawzall, cribbing and an oversize backboard, which is extremely useful for removal of oversize/overweight victims.

During 1998, the original two Tactical Support Unit apparatus were replaced by two new, larger apparatus constructed by Saulsbury on International four-wheel-drive chassis. Each of these vehicles is equipped with a 25-kilowatt electrical generator, winch, telescopic light tower and a crane. The front-mounted winch is rated for 12,000-pound capacity. Six 1500-watt quartz floodlights are mounted on the 30-foot telescopic light tower,



The light tower extends to a height of 30 feet and is capable of turning the operations scene into a safely lit area.

all photos by Battalion Chief John Calderone



The Tactical Support Units have four-wheel-drive capability and are equipped with a front-mounted winch, generator, crane and light tower.



The crane has a 10,000-foot/lbs. capacity: three-foot reach @ 3200 lbs. to 15-foot reach @ 660 lbs.

which is capable of 360-degree rotation. This tower can be operated remotely via a cable control. Each vehicle is equipped with a 3200-lbs. capacity (at three feet) crane with a 15-foot maximum reach at 660 lbs. The crane is capable of 360-degree rotation with an operational range from -5 to 75 degrees. The crane also can be operated by a remote cable control. Each apparatus is equipped with hydraulic outriggers to support the crane's load and an overload sensor that automatically shuts down the crane when its rated load is exceeded. The crane can be used to rapidly deploy the res-



Rear view of the Tactical Support Unit shows the outriggers, electrical supply outlets and rescue boat.

cue boat, assist in moving overpack drums and for many other situations. Outlets at the rear of the apparatus are capable of supplying 120 volts/20 amps and 240 volts/30 amps.

Although small in size, the two Tactical Support Units pack a big punch when used at fires and emergency operations.

About the Author...

Battalion Chief John A. Calderone is a 25-year veteran of the FDNY. Currently, he is assigned to Battalion 22. He holds a degree in Fire Protection from New York City Community College and has written extensively on the subject of fire apparatus. He is a regular contributor to WNYF.



Lieutenant Tim Kelly, SOC, Presented with the Alfred P. Sloan Public Service Award

On March 2, 1999, **Lieutenant Tim Kelly** joined an elite class of award-winners. He was presented with the 1998 Alfred P. Sloan Public Service Award for his innovations with fire equipment and rescue protocols. Specifically, he was honored for designing the Kelly Kart (see *WNYF*, 3rd/98), a modular portable emergency tool that provides light and power to inaccessible locations; helping to design and introduce robotics and other equipment to the decontamination facility so that three times as many pieces of gear exposed to asbestos, PCBs, blood-borne pathogens and the like can be cleaned; applying cutting-edge pumping technology to alleviate flooding in subways, hospitals and schools; and creating protocols with federal and local agencies that can be used in response to chemical, biological and nuclear disasters. Additionally, he was recognized for his outstanding administrative skills.

A special tribute, hosted by **Commissioner Thomas Von Essen** and the members of the Special Operations Command (SOC), was held at SOC on Roosevelt Island, on the morning of March 2nd. The actual award ceremony took place at 5:45 P.M. of the same day at The Great Hall at Cooper Union, Manhattan.

Raymond M. Downey, Chief, SOC--Rescue Operations, presided over the ceremonies, offering the official welcome, followed by **FDNY Chaplain Father Mychal Judge's** invocation. Testimonials to Lieutenant Kelly's courage, honor, integrity and dedication were provided by Chief Downey, **Arthur Parrinello**, President of the Uniformed



(Left to right) **Acting Chief of Department Peter J. Ganci, Jr.**, **Commissioner Thomas Von Essen**, **Barbara Cohen**, **Bishop Joseph Sullivan**, **Mary McCormick** and **Battalion Chief Raymond M. Downey** congratulate **Lieutenant Tim Kelly** (second from right), recipient of the **Alfred P. Sloan Public Service Award**.

Fire Officers Association, **Peter J. Ganci, Jr., Acting Chief of Department**, and **Fire Commissioner Von Essen**. Also in attendance was **City-wide Tour Commander Frank Cruthers**. Additional laudatory remarks were offered by **Mary C. McCormick**, President, Fund for the City of New York, and **Bishop Joseph Sullivan**, Chairman, Selection Panel for The Fund for the City of New York.

For the past 26 years, The Fund for the City of New York, Alfred P. Sloan Public Service Award program, "has been honoring outstanding civil servants whose work performance and commitment to the public transcend not merely the ordinary but the extraordinary--day after day and year after year. In honoring these winners (and the 173 previous winners who were selected from among more than 250,000 eligible workers), we also acknowledge the contributions of the many thousands of dedicated public servants who, with integrity and devotion, perform the work that keeps this complex city running."

Lieutenant Kelly is one of several FDNY members who have been so honored. He joins some pretty exclusive company with **John T. O'Hagan, Chief and Fire Commissioner--1973**; **Sidney Ifshin, Chief of the Division for Fire Prevention--1977**; **John Vigiano, Lieutenant, Rescue Company 2--1982**; **James J. Curran, Lieutenant, Rescue Company 1--1985**; and **JoAnn Jacobs, Fire Marshal, Bureau of Fire Investigation--1995**, as previous winners.

Although Lieutenant Kelly's illustrious, 21-year FDNY career was short-circuited due to an injury (he retired at the end of March), his reward has been "to see people in this city saved and know I played a part." His credo is one by which the whole fire service lives: "To think ahead and plan for the unexpected."

All in the FDNY salute you, Lieutenant Tim Kelly!