

(Right) The Field Communications Unit has been assigned this new apparatus built by the Rescue Master division of American LaFrance on a 2001 Freightliner chassis. A new portable Command Post board, which is more stable and can be wheeled to its operation location, is carried on the new apparatus. (Below) This interior view shows the dispatcher's console with multiple radios, MDT, laptop computer, cell phones and closed circuit video camera monitor.



all photos by Battalion Chief John A. Calderone

### Special Apparatus

# New Field Communications Unit

by Battalion Chief John A. Calderone

A new, state-of-the-art vehicle recently was placed into service at the Field Communications Unit. The new apparatus, constructed by the Rescue Master division of American LaFrance, is built on a 2001 Freightliner FL106 chassis. The apparatus is fully climate-controlled and has a built-in 25kW generator to supply power. It is equipped with a video camera mounted on a 30-foot hydraulic mast that extends through the apparatus roof. The camera has 360-degree rotation and zoom capabilities.

The interior of the apparatus is divided into three work positions, including dispatcher's command post, EMS console and a resource/chief's position. The primary work area is the dispatcher's position, located at the rear of the apparatus. Located at this console are six radios that are capable of operating on FDNY frequencies. Four of these are used for handie-talkie traffic on tactical and command frequencies; one is set to the City-wide frequency; and the last is operated on the frequency of the borough where the incident is taking place.

Also located here are an 800-megahertz radio and a scanner. Additionally, there are two cellular phones--one of which can be used as a portable--a Starfire MDT and a converter-com that enables the use of portable radios from other agencies. A laptop computer allows establishment of a log, enhances record-keeping, contains various forms and features a mapping program. The video camera controls are located here, as is a monitor to view

what the camera is filming.

There are three EMS radios, an EMS mobile data terminal and a work area at the EMS console position. The work area at the resource/chief's position provides ample space to review plans or paperwork. Another cell phone that can be used as a portable also is located here.

Other electronic equipment includes another larger monitor for the video camera, two VCR units that both record from the video camera simultaneously, another VCR with normal broadcast reception to monitor local news programs, a laser printer that can print from either the laptop computer or the MDT, a combination fax/copy machine and an AM/FM radio and CD player. There is a 10-channel recorder that records all handie-talkie traffic at the incident and another recorder for EMS channels.

A variety of portable radios are carried, including four 800 megahertz, Port Authority radios for JFK and LaGuardia Airports, a Marine radio, a high-rise repeater radio and seven FDNY portable radios, which can be used for on-scene exchange. Other equipment carried inside the apparatus includes a megaphone, vests lettered *Field Comm Unit* and *Communications Coordinator*, two SCBAs, a supply of clipboards and videotapes, resource books, three gang chargers and a supply of extra batteries, cases and speaker mikes for on-scene replacement.

Exterior compartments house the built-in generator, a Honda portable generator, electric reel and connectors, sound-powered telephone system and a new-style portable Command Post board mounted on a hand truck. This Command Post is removed and replaced on the apparatus via an electric winch mounted in the compartment. It has a battery pack and light for nighttime operations.

This new apparatus incorporates many design features that will enable Field Communications personnel to effectively perform their mission.

#### About the Author...

*Battalion Chief John A. Calderone has served the FDNY since 1973. Currently, he is working in 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.*

