

U.S. Air Force Experimental Crash Trucks, Type O-7 & O-8

By Ted Heinbuch

In September 1947 the US Air Force was organized and assumed fire protection duties at, and inherited fire apparatus from the former Army Air Force airfields. During 1950 and 1951 the Air Force looked at the fire apparatus it had and planned for new vehicles to meet its future needs.

Looking to replace the Class 155 former Army crash truck which lacked all weather capability and exposed crew members to the elements the Type O-8 experimental crash truck was developed. Built on the Kenworth, 8 ton, 6x6 chassis with floatation type tires it carried a Hall Scott Model 400 engine and Hale ZEYMHD high pressure water pump which was mounted in the forward part of the chassis. The fire fighting package including all aluminum body, tanks, heaters, controls, turrets and other equipment was built and assembled by Hurst Industries.

The O-8 was designed to operate in all climates and was equipped with an auxiliary generator which supplied power for heating units in the engine block, oil pan, and tanks when the truck was deployed to standby operations on the airfield. When on standby in quarters the heating system operated from the building electrical service from a plug-in slave cable. The five man enclosed cab was equipped with dual, heat resistant glass windshield panes which allowed for air circulation between the glass and had de-icing and de-fogging mechanisms.

The truck carried two 55 gallon foam tanks and two water tanks totaling 1000 gallons and 200 pounds of carbon dioxide. The fire pump could be engaged while the truck was traveling at speeds up to 40 mph. Twin turrets, one mounted on each front fender were equipped with four different nozzles they included, straight stream, fog, foam and sno-foam. Two ground sweep nozzles were mounted below the front bumper and handlines were mounted on reels inside the

body of the truck. The trucks under went testing at the Alaska Air Command and the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. It is believed that only two were produced and never went into full production. One reason for this is that during the period of development contracts has been awarded to American LaFrance and Marmon Herrington for the production of the O-10 crash truck.

Another experimental crash truck was the Type O-7. It was developed as an all climate water tanker and was similar in appearance to the Type O-8 but lacked the fender mounted front turrets and had no fire fighting capacity other then to supply crash trucks with water. Air Force records indicate it carried 1000 gallons of water and 150 gallons of foam. After testing it was determined that money could be better spent on larger crash carrying the same amount of water, two Type O-7s were produced and underwent testing.

Both the Type O-7 and O-8 carried registration numbers in the "50" series, a carryover from the Army fire truck numbering system. With the arrival of the Class 530A pumpers and the O-10 crash trucks the Air Force implemented its own registration numbers, the "P" series.