

Fire Department

It will not be long before you may see a new air wagon in service for the Sylvania Township Fire Department.

An air wagon is one of those lesser-known items necessary when the department is fighting a fire which for any number of reasons will take a long time to extinguish.

When firefighters are in harm's way, in a smoke-filled environment, their air packs, or oxygen tanks, are something that cannot be done without and the air wagon is what keeps those tanks filled.

"It is not something we need very often, but when we need it, we need it," Fire Chief Jeffrey Kowalski said.

A new vehicle, outfitted for use as an air wagon, the chief estimated would cost at least \$200,000. The chief said the total cost of this township vehicle should be under \$20,000.

A big part of the savings was possible when he chief was able to buy, for \$1, a life squad which was being taken out of service by Lucas County. He said a private contractor was used to refit the vehicle with all the hoses, pipes needed as well as move the core equipment from the old air wagon.

The vehicle needed some minor repairs and there is some rust to be dealt with, but to have a well-functioning air wagon is something a fire department cannot do without. That work and some painting brought the rough estimate to under \$20,000.

In the case of a big blaze the air wagon is brought to the scene. It is able to fill two air packs at a time. Each firefighter always has two air packs. When one gets low, he will get out of the building, put on the other one, and hand the used one to personnel on the air wagon for refilling.

He said the need for the apparatus is an example, "of what I am sure some guys are tired of hearing from me. Everything we have must always be in top condition.

"We never have the opportunity to stop a job and come back with a different tool."

He pointed out that the first thing every firefighter does every day is check their air pack.

"You may not need it on any given day, but when you need it, you need it. It is your life line."

The same is true of the air wagon, if air is not available to refill the air packs firefighters would have to retreat from fighting a blaze.

Our job is to save that property and the air wagon is a little-known but essential part of everything that goes into the process, the chief added.

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