

# *BLM News*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
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## **EXPERIMENTAL FIRE ENGINE TESTED IN ELKO COUNTY**

“There’s no other fire engine like it in the nation,” said BLM Elko Fire Management Officer Joe Freeland in describing the prototype of the next generation of wildland fire engines. “It’s unique.”

Based on technology developed for the military in the Czech Republic, the “Wildland Ultra XT” experimental fire engine is being field tested this summer by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office’s Wells, Nevada, Fire Station.

The project is the brainchild of BLM Nevada State Office Fire Operations Officer Mike Lipka and has been in the works for over five years. The engine is a joint venture among the Czech Republic company “Tatra” who originally developed and owns the design; American Truck Company of Fort Bend, Indiana; S & S Fire Apparatus Company of Fairmount, Indiana; and finally BLM. Once in production, the engines will cost about \$300,000 each.

“While the new experimental engine costs about 1/3 more than the engines currently used, its additional capabilities make the extra cost worthwhile,” Freeland added.

Heston Johns, BLM Wells Fire Station Engine Module Leader and project inspector/tester in charge of the engine commented, “The engine has more capability than anything we currently use. It holds up to 2400 gallons of water and has the ability to access steep terrain. Its looks are deceiving, but off road, it’s far superior to anything I’ve ever driven.”

“The engine will travel safely on twice as much of a side slope as our existing engines and it will climb a 100% slope (45 degree angle) – the only wheeled vehicle in the world which will do that,” Johns said. “At our field testing last week at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, we drove up a slope greater than 100%.”

“The unit was basically designed and developed to handle heavy loads in steep terrain, and to provide for more rapid initial attack response in rugged country. When responding to a wildland fire, this vehicle can travel 40 miles per hour off-road where normal engines are restricted to five or ten miles per hour,” said Joe Freeland.

“Wells was selected as the test site because of the nature of the terrain in the eastern half of Elko County. When this year’s fire season is over, the vehicle will be taken to Salt Lake City, Utah, where it will be analyzed to see how well it held up. There are computer chips installed all over the rig. Information from the chips will be retrieved to help with the analysis. In addition, we keep a daily log of performance.”

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