

Fire Brigade Gets Five New Specialised Units

Minister of State in the Office of The Prime Minister with responsibility for Local Government, Honourable Robert Montague, addressing the audience at the Handing Over Ceremony. The country's fire service is now benefitting from an additional five new emergency tenders (fire trucks), which were commissioned into operation, on Thursday, April 29, at the York Park Fire Station in Kingston, by Minister of State in the Department of Local Government in the Office of the Prime Minister, Honourable Robert Montague. The new units are the first batch of 13 specialist vehicles to be acquired by the Jamaica Fire Brigade, and will be deployed in Kingston, Montego Bay, St. Catherine and St. Ann, with the fourth to be held in reserve for a location to be designated by Commissioner of the Brigade. Speaking at the handing over ceremony, Mr. Montague explained that the tenders would be critical in rescue operations, as they had special capabilities, particularly in dealing with accidents. "The Commissioner has informed me that enough men and women have been trained to utilize these bits of specialized equipment that have the ability to lift the engine out of a car at the scene of an accident, maybe to lift a small car off a human being," he said, pointing out that the capacity for thermal imagery was also critical, as with the virtual night vision enabled by this technology, the lives of firefighters would no longer be unduly endangered. Thermal imaging is a state-of-the-art technology that enables firefighters to see through smoke, fog or darkness, by translating temperature differences into visual images. It also allows the seat of a fire to be seen despite smoke and gas. "The hydraulic cutting tools that are equipped with those units will be of vital importance to those who do not heed the warning of the police to cut down on their speed. A lot of times we lose citizens in accidents because we don't have the capability to cut them out of the motor vehicle," the State Minister said. Mr. Montague made special mention of former Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller and former Minister of Local Government, Dean Peart, "who laid the foundation for today, so that we could be here to take receipt of these units. I am of the firm belief that we should build on what we have, rather than to reinvent the wheel." The State Minister said that the role and task of being a firefighter can be a very thankless one, and on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, "I would like to place on record our sincere appreciation for the work and worth of members of the Jamaica fire brigade, because we are convinced that the men and women in this brigade represent the best that the region has to offer." Meanwhile, Commissioner Laurie Williams told the gathering that the units represent another example of the brigade striving for on-going improvement, with the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment that are in line with emerging trends in rescue service requirements. The units were deployed, immediately following the ceremony. Article taken from the JIS website - Thursday, May 01, 2008