

Firemen upgrade rescue

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Every year the Albia Volunteer Fire Department has a fund-raising appeal to area residents, but every year the funds aren't spent. For the past few years, the department has been saving for a major upgrade in its Albia Fire Rescue equipment and this was the year for that upgrade.

Over \$35,000 was spent to upgrade the Fire Rescue truck and its equipment, mainly its extrication equipment, commonly known as "Jaws of Life."

The original Hurst Jaws of Life were purchased in 1978, weighed 80 pounds and needed two firefighters to operate it. Over the course of time, with car frames being built with boron, the original Jaws of Life have become obsolete.

The department purchased three new Hurst pieces of extrication equipment, including a cutting tool, a spreading tool and a power ram. Each piece of equipment weighs between 30 and 40 pounds and can be operated by a single fireman.

Incredibly, the tools are all powered by rechargeable lithium batteries instead of being hooked to cumbersome hydraulic cables.

Relco Locomotives and Larry Miller helped the Albia firemen retrofit their rescue truck with new heavy duty slide out shelving.

The money raised also provided for upgrades in the battery powered hand tools that go with the rescue truck including a new windshield cutter and metal circular saw. "The new windshield cutter is a huge benefit because it doesn't shatter glass," said Fire Chief John Freshwater. "It's far safer for both firemen and the people we're trying to free from vehicle crashes.

"We do fund-raising every year, but save those donations over the course of several years to make the purchases we need to keep the department modernized," said Freshwater. "We want to make sure the people in the community who respond to our yearly appeals know what their money is going for and how much we appreciate their donations."



New Jaws of Life

ALBIA FIRE CHIEF John Freshwater and Assistant Chief Dan Tometich hold two of the new Hurst "Jaws of Life" extrication tools purchased to upgrade the department's rescue truck.