



The Ocean City Fire Department took possession of its new fireboat, built by Moore Boat LLC of Bishopville, at Harbour Island Marina on June 11. The shallow draft boat cost \$540,000. STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN SHANE

New OC fireboat is one-of-a-kind

Can travel in water as shallow as 4 inches deep

By Brian Shane
Staff Writer

OCEAN CITY — The Ocean City Fire Department has received its new fireboat, one that can travel across the coastal bays in shallow water that would ground other vessels.

"There's never been a boat like this built for fire and rescue," said Leighton Moore of Moore Boat LLC, which built the vessel. "We've certainly never built one before, so there's a learning curve on it. But they wanted so many things so that it would function as both a rescue and fireboat, so if they were out on a call or training, and they had a problem, they would be able to attend to that either way."

It took Moore and his crew about two years to build the 35-foot boat from the ground up at his Bishopville boatyard. It was modeled after another shallow-draft boat designed and built by Moore for his personal use. He's been using it for 15 years as a sort of commuter ride between his West Ocean City waterfront home and Seacrets, the 49th Street bar he owns.

"In the bay, you basically have to ride on a highway of the (nautical) markers, and everybody's there. I wanted to go from my house to Seacrets fast, and not have to follow the highway. So this boat draws about 4 inches of water. It's made for the bay," he said.

Indeed, to drive home the boat's shallow draft performance, a video from Moore Boat's website shows the vessel in the coastal bays speeding past a man standing in ankle-deep water.

The Ocean City Fire Department wanted a fireboat that didn't have to follow established channels when responding to an emergency call out on the water. Overall, they needed a boat that

could put out fires, and offer emergency medical care, and aid in rescue and hazardous materials response missions.

Resort firefighters have a lot of waterfront property to cover: 688 public boat slips and 465 boat racks, thousands of residential waterfront properties, as well as marinas, which store 54,000 gallons of gasoline and 93,000 gallons of diesel fuel during the tourist season.

The boat cost Ocean City about \$540,000, which was defrayed in part by a \$150,000 grant from the state's Department of Natural Resources. However, Moore said the boat is worth more than \$1 million, based on everything he's put into it.

The boat is constructed of solid marine-grade aluminum. Moore has described the boat's patented hull design as akin to a giant, maneuverable skiboat.

The boat's water cannon actually uses the same engine transmission to pump water to a fire, which is something Moore said has never been done in tandem. It can pump about 1,200 gallons of water a minute for a distance of 85 yards, and it will be able to maneuver at the same time it's pumping. All other fireboats use an additional pump.

Moore Boat worked closely with the fire department to develop other custom tweaks.

There's storage space for medical backboards, and the flagpole becomes a 500-pound lift capacity crane. The boat also has a special device to fight dock fires and store foam on board to fight petroleum-based fires. There's even a space inside the cabin for patients to lie down, including a hook to hang an intravenous bag.

"This day is a couple of years in the making," said Ocean City Fire Department Chief Chris Larmore. "There has

BY THE NUMBERS

NEW OCFD FIRE BOAT

Model: Moore Boat 32
Length: 35.5 feet, including aft dive platform and bow push knees
Width: 12 feet, including protective bumper
Power: Twin Yanmar LV-350 diesel engines, twin American Turbine SD 301 pumps
Draft: 6 inches on plane, 18 inches static
Speed: 35 mph under normal equipment load
Electronics: Radar/GPS, sonar, infrared camera, VHF and 800 megahertz radios
Features: Onboard EMS/patient care equipment, 500-pound Davit system, onboard rescue swimmer equipment, integrated dive equipment storage, LED scene lighting, dive platform with ladder

ONLINE VIDEO

See a video of the Ocean City fireboat in action at DelmarvaNow.com.

been a lot of research, planning and just plain hard work put into the building of this vessel. I am really proud of the final product, and I can't wait to show the residents and visitors of Ocean City what this boat is capable of, thanks to the hard work of our employees and our partners at Moore Boat."

A formal dedication of the vessel will be held June 27. Both this boat and an earlier Moore Boat prototype patrol boat will be on display through Wednesday at the Maryland State Fireman's Association Convention, behind the Roland E. Powell Convention Center.

bshane@dmg.gannett.com
On Twitter @bwsbane