



National Park Service
Department of the Interior

Great Smoky Mountains
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Great Smoky Mountains Fire Management

Gatlinburg Fire Department Receives Equipment Under Federal Grant

The Gatlinburg Fire Department got an assortment of new fire fighting equipment in late July 2003, courtesy of a federal grant through their neighbors at Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The grant came from funds appropriated to the Department of the Interior under its National Fire Plan.

The equipment delivered included a new All-Terrain Vehicle, two chainsaws and two leaf blowers and the associated safety gear needed to use the items in fighting wildland fires in the Gatlinburg area.

According to Gatlinburg Fire Chief, Gary West, "Parts of Gatlinburg are a mix of homes and rental units built on steep slopes and closely surrounded by dense brush and forest. Some of this terrain is not easily accessible for regular fire trucks and hoses, so this equipment will help us go in and knock down fires before they can reach structures."

Acting Park Superintendent Phil, who joined West to inspect the newly arrived items said, "The Park and Gatlinburg have an agreement that draws upon the strengths each of us has in fighting fire. Our Park staff members, who are very experienced in cutting fire lines and suppressing fire in the woods, respond to calls for help from Gatlinburg to assist in wildland fires in town. In exchange Gatlinburg FD provides the bulk of our response capability to control vehicle fires and blazes inside the buildings in the Park that our employees have neither the training nor the equipment to do safely."

After a series of very bad fire years in the late 1990's the nation's two largest federal land managers, the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, worked with the National Association of State Foresters to undertake a 10-year "National Fire Plan." Under the Plan, federal, state and local fire agencies are working to better manage the impacts of wildfires on the nation's wild lands and upon communities potentially affected by wildland fire.

According to Francis, "With the mix of development and forest we are seeing today across the country we recognize that a cooperative - federal, state, local - approach is essential to manage fire in this 'urban interface'." The equipment provided to Gatlinburg is valued at about \$6,000 which came from a Community Assistance Program (CAP) established under the National Fire Plan. The CAP is focused on building state and community capacity to develop and implement citizen-driven solutions that will lessen local vulnerability to risks associated with wildland fires."