

CITY OF MUSCATINE



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MFD DEBUTS NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART AMBULANCE

New features prioritize safety, efficiency, and patient care

MUSCATINE, Iowa –

The Muscatine Fire Department (MFD) is rolling out a new generation of ambulances this week, with the first redesigned unit set to go into service after a final round of equipment installation and supply loading by department staff.



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This latest ambulance marks the department's first major redesign in over 15 years, a shift aimed at improving both responder efficiency and patient care.

"Since the start of the ambulance service with the MFD, the ambulances have all been basically built the same," Fire Mechanic Mike Collins said. "This is the first time that we have branched out and did a complete redesign to increase efficiency for the medics and improve care for the patients."

The new Wheeled Coach Type III ambulance features an innovative interior layout, highlighted by a newly constructed IV supply tower. This addition eliminates the need for medics to pass a supply box during calls, giving them faster, safer access to critical materials.

"We built a new feature, a tower, that will be dedicated for IV setup," Collins said.

In the past, responders would pass a box loaded with IV supplies back and forth when working on a patient.

"We built this tower to enable easy access to IV supplies for our responders," Collins said.

"Again, we are creating a more efficient workspace for the medics, which in turn makes a better experience for the patient."

Among the ambulance's advanced features is a Powerload System — an advanced feature designed to enhance both patient and operator safety. This system automates the lifting, lowering, and loading of securing of stretchers. This significantly reduces physical strain on medics and minimizes the risk of injury to both patients and personnel.

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"This upgrade is a major step forward in safety and functionality," said Battalion Chief Gary Ronzheimer, who also serves as the department's Emergency Medical Services Chief. "Our crews respond to thousands of calls annually. Having the right tools makes a critical difference. The new design and Powerload system will help protect our staff and improve care during transport."

That is not the only innovation being added to the new unit. MFD staff have installed a monitor on a swivel base on top of the IV tower that can be monitored by the medics after the monitor is hooked up to the patient.

"We can monitor the patient's status while we are buckled into our seats," Collins said. "And we are going to do the same thing with the ventilator on the other side of the unit next to the cabinet with the ventilator supplies."

All to make the unit for efficient for both the medic and the patient.

The new seats are also unique in that the harnesses allow the medics the freedom to work on the patient while maintaining their safety in case of an accident.

"The harnesses will pull us back and secure us to the seat in case of an accident," Collins said. "This is a vast improvement over the other ambulances that do not allow us that freedom."

The unit is better engineered inside and out with responders having the ability to access equipment from both inside the unit and out including a gear cabinet that holds the medics firefighting gear in case it is needed.

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A new lighting system is also included that features the ability to dim the interior lights and to use various colors of light.

"The lights can be a problem for a patient lying on the cot so this new system helps the patient but still allows the medics to monitor and assist the patient during transport," Collins said.

The ride?

"It is still an ambulance built with a stronger suspension because of the terrain the ambulance must drive over at times," Collins said. "The ride may be better but it is still an ambulance."

Feld Fire was awarded the bid to build the new unit, which was approved by the Muscatine City Council on September 7, 2023, at a cost of \$279,772. Funding for the vehicle was included in the City's May 2024 Bond Issue.

The new unit will be designated as Squad 355 and will replace the department's oldest ambulance — a 2016 Ford E450 Type III — which has logged more than 275,000 miles in service.