Dual-purpose Fire Control Vehicle

The latest dual purpose fire control vehicle is a far cry from the first four-wheeled "fast attack" fire control vehicle operated by the Forests Department, shown in the top photograph, which was taken at Dwellingup in 1934.

The vehicle, a Ford A, was well equipped and included such items as the "Narrogin" type knapsack spray, rakes, axes and shovels.

One of the first heavy duty outfits in service was the old horse and dray which carried a water tank fitted with a semi-rotary hand pump.

The Forests Department's newest fire fighting unit, pictured below, is a combination of the four-wheel drive heavy duty tanker and the lighter, more mobile gang truck. The design embodies a 600-gallon capacity flat steel tank built permanently into the chassis of a Bedford five-ton class four-wheel drive truck.

Crew seating accommodation, protection canopy and stowed working equipment combine to provide a most flexible unit for all field conditions.

The vehicle is radio equipped for better logistical control.

Five of these vehicles have now been equipped, and a further group of seven units are either under construction or approved on the present works programme.

This will make at least one new type unit available for each forest division in the immediate future.

The dual purpose system enables a reduction in the number of vehicles required when compared to the previous system. This in itself will mean a considerable saving in capital cost, plus the fact that the dual purpose unit, being more versatile, will give far greater service and economy within its normal change-over period.

Each vehicle has a full range of equipment such as pack sprays, specially designed fire rakes, shovels and a chain saw.

The most modern type of high pressure fire pumper unit, powered by a high performance four-cylinder water cooled engine is built into the rear of the chassis and is permanently connected to the tank system.

This unit is equipped to draught water from rivers, lagoons and dams in order to fill its own tank when operating away from overhead water filling facilities.

The pressure side of the sytem is equipped with four hose outlets: one of smaller volume capacity for light duty operations, and three major outlets for maximum volume application.

The standard hose equipment for the latter is 10 100-ft. lengths of 1⅛-in. diameter canvas hose which provides a reach of 1,000 ft. primarily for plantation fire fighting.