



MIAMI-DADE FIRE RESCUE/SUTPHEN

FIELD REPORT



Miami-Dade Fire Rescue is undeniably one of the biggest fire departments in the nation with 72 stations serving 29 municipalities covering an area of over 2,400 square miles. With such a large service district, the agency needs a diverse and reliable fleet of apparatus to meet the unique daily responses.

Since 2014, Miami-Dade responders have been working with Sutphen Corporation for their apparatus needs, having ordered 21 units, including several SPH 100 and SL 75 aerials. Recently, the agency ordered an additional 13 apparatus, including seven custom pumpers, two pumper-tankers and four additional 75-foot mid-mount aerials.

Miami-Dade is the seventh most populous county in the United States, and it needs an apparatus builder capable of providing the dependable and mission-driven equipment its responders need to protect its residents.

Sutphen is the company that is up to that challenge.

"Sutphen is a 131-year-old, family-owned company that builds quality fire apparatus and incorporates unique designs for the 21st Century," said Omar Cuartas, a firefighter/driver with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, part of the personnel team responsible for designing and building the departments heavy apparatus fleet. "The quality and pride in their product are evident and the delivery times have been accurate."

Cuartas added that another factor in the selection of Sutphen as his department's apparatus manufacturer was the quality of the dealer

Below: One of Miami-Dade Fire Rescue's SPH 100 navigating a roundabout.





Above: Miami-Dade Fire Rescue showcases five of their SP 70 single axle aerals.



that sold and will service the apparatus – South Florida Emergency Vehicles (SFEV), located in Fort Myers, FL.

“We work through SFEV not only to bring our ideas to reality but to service our apparatus once delivered,” Cuartas said. “...No matter who builds your truck, ALL trucks break down. Service through your dealer, the manufacturer and your department’s service technicians are what gets those new trucks back on the road quicker.”

David Stonitsch, the president, and owner of SFEV, said the Miami-Dade Sutphen order highlights the company’s ability to work with the largest of departments in the nation.

“South Florida Emergency Vehicles works with departments throughout Florida, and we are proud to offer Sutphen products versatile enough for both large, urban departments like Miami-Dade and small, rural departments throughout the state,” said Stonitsch.

Zach Rudy, Sutphen’s director of sales and marketing, said he is pleased Sutphen can provide apparatus that are unique to Miami-Dade Fire Rescue’s needs.

“Working with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, one of the largest departments in the United States, provides a unique opportunity for Sutphen Corporation and our Florida dealer, South Florida Emergency Vehicles,”

said Rudy. “As our company and our dealerships continues to grow, we look forward to serving more and more departments of all sizes while maintaining an unforgettable and unmatched Sutphen Experience.”

Given the size of Miami-Dade’s response area and its unique geographic features, the department has need for a very diverse fleet.

Cuartas said his department has response units dedicated to air rescue service, ocean rescue, fire and rescue operations, airport rescue (ARFF), marine, hazmat, urban search and rescue (USAR), technical rescue and venom response.

“Our large territory includes everything from wildland fire, urban interface, apartments, condos, town homes, single-family homes, to over 60-story high rises,” Cuartas said. “We are a very aggressive firefighting department that constantly trains for every kind of fire you can imagine.” He added that Miami-Dade has four firefighters assigned to every suppression apparatus and three firefighters to every rescue unit which means the department has sufficient staffing on the scene quickly to manage any situation they may encounter.

Sutphen Corporation, according to Cuartas, is well suited to helping Miami-Dade meeting its apparatus needs because it works closely with its clients to meet their needs.



"I can pick up the phone or write an email and know that a Sutphen family member is available to answer my questions," Cuartas said. "On the production line, you will find other families working side by side. The father that worked for the company for over 30 years now has his son working there as well. That's the true measure of a company's success. If you have an opportunity to tour their manufacturing facilities, you will see and feel what I am describing, that generation after generation not only run the company but build the trucks."

Cuartas said that unlike many departments in the nation, Miami-Dade allows the firefighters and drivers to have a say in the apparatus purchased for the community. He said he and Firefighter/Driver Jeffrey Hackman run lead for the design and building of apparatus. They both have over 25 years of experience in fire operations.

"Typically, you will see someone with the rank of captain or chief in this position," Cuartas said. "We are fortunate to have the support of MDFR's Fire Chief Allen Cominski and Logistics Chief Jason Fernandez.

Taking the time to ask questions of the crews is a huge part of the role he and Hackman are in, Cuartas said.

"As important as it may be to have that support from the chiefs, there are many others that assist and bring valuable knowledge and experience to the process, mainly the men and women riding the trucks in operations. Taking the time to ask questions of the crews is a huge part of the role we are in," Cuartas said.

Below: A driver's side view of a new Miami-Dade Fire Rescue custom pumper.



Cuartas said his involvement with the apparatus selection process started in 2019 when MDFR Airport Division Chief John Gardener put together a team to build a new pumper for Station 12 at Miami International Airport. Chief Gardener gave three veteran drivers, each with more than 25 years' experience, the opportunity to get the job done. Cuartas said he was one of the three selected to specify the new engine.

"Who better to build a truck for the airport division," Cuartas asks. "Three airport guys that understood the needs of the airport division."

In March 2020, Gardner was asked to take the reins of the department's Logistics Division, according to Cuartas. In doing so he asked Cuartas and the two other firefighters who were involved in the design of the new airport pumper to be part of the apparatus selection process.

"When we designed and built Engine 12, we followed one important rule, crew input is paramount in the design process. The men and women running the calls are the best gauge of what is needed. We are the voice of the crews and bring their wants and needs to fruition."

By listening to the firefighters, MDFR made some major changes to the 13 trucks it ordered from Sutphen early in 2021. Some of the major changes included lighting improvements, larger cabs for crew comfort, larger seat cushions and compartments in the body of the trucks for SCBAs and dirty turnout gear to promote clean cab design.

MDFR incorporated what the department calls a "white out" feature that allows the driver to put all emergency lights on the working side of the apparatus to a steady burn white, Cuartas said. He added that the feature increases the amount of working white light on the scene as well as reducing the chaos of emergency lights flashing while working. The three remaining sides of the truck remain in emergency mode.

MDFR firefighters said the emergency light vendor, TOMAR Electronics, worked diligently to meet the department's exact needs. TOMAR's efforts helped MDFR get apparatus they feel confident about while responding and working on a scene.

"This is also a very effective option for our units operating out of the more rural areas of our county to get more light on any scene we encounter," Cuartas said.

Cuartas said MDFR worked with Sutphen and SFEV, the dealer that sold the units, to maximize compartment space.

"All available space is utilized properly to accomplish our mission of protecting the lives and property of our community," Cuartas said. "Sutphen helps us to be 'always ready, proud to serve. ... Sutphen apparatus are American built, superbly designed and engineered. With so many different response disciplines MDFR has to have a partner in Sutphen that meets those needs."