



**For immediate release
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WORLD'S MOST ADVANCED FIREBOAT HEADED TO HOUSTON VIA GREAT LAKES AND MISSISSIPPI

HOUSTON -- A two-week voyage through four Great Lakes and the Mississippi River will bring to the Port of Houston Authority the first of three high-performance fireboats to replace the current fleet. The new fireboats will equip the Port Authority's firefighting team with the most sophisticated fleet in the world.

"As the nation's busiest port in terms of foreign tonnage and home to one of the world's largest petrochemical complexes, our firefighting team is second to none in protecting this national asset and the many who work here," said Port Authority Executive Director Len Waterworth. "These new fireboats will strengthen these firefighters' ability to save lives and property along the 25-mile long Port of Houston."

The five-member crew includes three from the Port of Houston Authority's Fire Department. The crew will bring the new craft across Lake Ontario and Lake Erie to Detroit, Mich (May 22) and then across Lake Huron and Lake Michigan to Chicago, Ill (May 25). From Chicago, the journey continues on the Cumberland River with a stop at Lockport, Ill (May 26). Following the Illinois River, the fireboat sails on to St. Louis, Mo (May 27) and the Mississippi River with four stops on the way to New Orleans, La (May 31): Cape Girardeau, Mo (May 28), Memphis, Tenn (May 29), Greenville, Miss (May 30), and Baton Rouge, La (May 31). A final stop will be made at Galveston, Texas (June 1) before arriving at the Port of Houston on about June 1, 2013.

To travel along with the new fireboat as it makes its way to Houston, follow posts by the Port Authority on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/PortofHouston> or on Twitter @Portof_Houston.

The voyage is being made by Port Authority Senior Captain Glenn Hood, a 14-year veteran of the fire department, and Engine Operators Robert Lacour and Vic Vasquez, each with 10 years at the Port Authority. These professionals are a part of a 45-member department of highly trained firefighters and Hazardous Materials Response Teams. The firefighters are certified by the state of Texas

as structural, marine, HazMat, and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). All pilots and captains are licensed U.S. Coast Guard mariners.

The Port of Houston Fire Department currently operates four fire stations strategically stationed along the Houston Ship Channel. The personnel and equipment fight marine and land fires and respond to other emergencies in the upper ship channel.

The ship will be piloted by Captain Ron Peddle, an owner of MetalCraft Marine with 32 years of experience piloting ships and 34 years of building boats.

The Firestorm 70

The new Firestorm 70 is a state-of-the-art command center and high speed response vessel. Built by MetalCraft Marine, each fireboat has powerful quad diesel inboard engines to propel the vessel at a swift 45 knots top speed. The current fleet clocks in at 14 and 16 knots. Such an improvement in speed is important when providing fire protection for the 25-mile long Port of Houston. The new fireboats are very maneuverable, can make quick stops and change direction within three boat lengths.

Part firehouse, part fireboat, the vessel enables the crew to stay on station for extended periods. The cabin includes a primary care berth with four secondary berths in the cuddy. Portable berths can be positioned in the aft equipment cabin to handle the injured at an incident.

Four firefighting pumps can produce flow meter results of 13,600 gallons per minute (GPM) at 150 pounds per square inch (PSI) and 17,000 GPM at 130 PSI and stream up to 450 feet with a roof mounted Stang monitor. This is three times the discharge rate of any of the current Port Authority fireboats. As a shore hydrant, the FireStorm 70 can pump an impressive 7,000 GPM at 70 PSI through 1000 feet of hose from a 5" Storz outlet before staging pumps are required.

Each fireboat is 70'10" long with a breadth of 22'10" and a draft of 34 inches. Funds for these vessels come mostly from federal grants to replace the three aging fireboats commissioned in 1973 and 1983.

"The entire MetalCraft team is honored to have been given this contract by the Port of Houston Authority," said Michael Allen, General Manager of MetalCraft Marine. "Under the guidance of Project Manager Jay Milner and Design Manager Ryan Hunter, our team of craftsmen put in over 20,000 hours to build this industry leading fast response Firestorm 70.

"During the build process, we worked closely with many people from the Port of Houston Authority and got to know them well. It is obvious that they take great pride in their very important roles and we are proud to be building our most well equipped Firestorm for them. Our goal is to provide the perfect boat for each of

our customers, and we hope the Port of Houston Authority feels we have succeeded.”

MetalCraft Marine is a fully integrated designer and manufacturer of custom high performance fire, rescue, patrol, research, and other specialized work boats. The business was established in 1987 and MetalCraft Marine is now a leader in the design and manufacturing of aluminum water-jet propelled craft with over 550 hulls built to date. The firm’s customers include the US Coast Guard, US Navy, and Panama Canal Authority.

History

In 1924, it was a fire in the hold of a steamship carrying cotton that prompted the Houston Fire Commissioner to declare that the Port of Houston needed adequate fire fighting apparatus to attack fires from the water as well as by land. A bond election to pay for the city’s first fireboat passed with a wide margin. Interestingly enough, this election occurred just one day after a fire along the banks of the Houston Ship Channel spread to oil on the water and burned for more than two hours with flames as high as 40 feet.

As a result, the fireboat Port Houston was built in 1925 and delivered the following year to the delight of thousands of spectators watching its arrival. The following day another 4,000 citizens turned out for a demonstration of the fireboat pumping water.

A new replacement fireboat, the Captain Crotty, was purchased, christened and put into service in 1950. The crew fought five ship fires and six refinery fires in the boat’s first year of service. In fact, at a fire at the General American Tank Storage Terminal, the fireboat spent 44 continuous hours at the scene pumping for 36 hours without stop.

Houston Ship Channel industries began to install manifolds on their docks in the 1950s to ensure that water would reach incidents at their facilities. The Channel Industries Mutual Aid group was also formed at this time. In 1971 the state legislature gave the Port Authority specific duties including providing "for the prevention, detection, control and fighting of fires and explosions on and adjacent to the waterways, channels and turning basins within its jurisdiction".

With such increased responsibility, fire fighting capability had to be improved. The fireboat Captain W.L Farnsworth was acquired in 1973. In 1981, the decision was made to retire the Captain Crotty and purchase two newer fireboats, the J.S. Bracewell and the Howard T. Tellepsen.

All three current fireboats have done their share of hazardous and heroic duty. For example, during the Phillips Company explosion in 1989, the fireboats performed a vital service ferrying 496 Phillips employees to safety at the fireboat

station at Greens Bayou. Once they were safely at the fireboat station, EMS units could triage the wounded and tend to their medical needs.

For more information, please visit www.portofhouston.com

The Port of Houston Authority logo is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=720>

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About the Port of Houston Authority

For nearly 100 years, the Port of Houston Authority has owned/operated the public cargo-handling facilities of the Port of Houston – the nation's largest port in terms of foreign waterborne tonnage. The port has historically been an economic engine for the Houston region, the state of Texas and the nation. The port contributes to the creation of more than one million statewide and more than 2.1 million nationwide jobs and the generation of more than \$178.5 billion of statewide and \$499 billion of nationwide economic activity.