

# Million dollar fire truck back in the shop

By Kathryn Reed

The last time anyone saw the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department's ladder truck it was on a flatbed headed east on Highway 50.

This specialized piece of equipment that cost the city more than \$1 million has never seen one day of service since it arrived in town at the beginning of this year.

It is in Reno having the power take off assembly repaired. This connects the engine to the ladder. It disintegrated while an outside trainer was in town to show the troops how to use the rig.

This is the second time since the city took possession of the nearly 48-foot truck that something serious has gone wrong. The first was when a driver for the manufacturer drove it from Louisiana to Tahoe in six-wheel drive for part of the trip.

That took a while to fix because the part had to be manufactured outside the United States. The differential had to be rebuilt.



South Lake Tahoe's ladder truck has not been operational since arriving

in February. Photo/Provided

It will be a few more weeks before the ladder truck returns from Reno. When does it will be tested to make sure everything is working, and then training will resume.

While the parts that are failing are under warranty and new warranties are issued when they are fixed, the city is not satisfied with this being enough.

“We as a city have gone after the manufacturer trying to get some money back,” Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*. The City Attorneys Office is handling that aspect of the matter.

Meston said the state Lemon Law does is not a factor because it is not the same part that keeps failing.

The need for the ladder truck comes into play for tall buildings and those that are set back a ways.

“You don’t want a fire truck right on top of a building in case it would collapse,” Meston said.

To get the original Chateau project approved the city needed a working ladder truck.

The old ladder truck was so decrepit it was taken out of service in 2012.

The city has been relying on Tahoe Douglas for its ladder truck.

South Lake Tahoe’s truck does not have a tank, pump or hose bed. Adding them would have made the apparatus too heavy to be driven on California roads. Meston said it is common at larger fire departments for there to be separate engine and truck companies.

Besides the cost of the truck, the city also remodeled Station

2 across from South Tahoe Middle School so the truck will fit there. In the winter it will most likely be stored at Lake Tahoe Airport. The goal is to not have equipment sitting outside during the winter.