

THREE FORTY THREE

LENGTH 140 feet
SPEED 20 mph fully loaded

CAPACITY 7 crew, 27 firefighters
COST \$27 million



4 ENGINES

Can pump up to 50,000 gallons of water per minute.

RESCUE CRANE

50-foot reach, with water spout, flood lights, and camera.

11 WATER CANNONS

Mounted around perimeter of ship, using 1,000 gallons of water and 3,600 gallons of foam concentrate.

FDNY commissions high-tech fireboat

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Standing on the deck of the FDNY's new high-tech fireboat, Lt. Tom Piambino didn't conceal his pride in Three Forty Three, 500 tons of gleaming red-and-white metal bristling with water cannons docked on a West Side pier yesterday.

"Yes, I'm one of the Magnificent 7," said Piambino, 60, of Island Park, referring to the ship's seven-person crew. "It's a great assignment. You could go anywhere in the New York City fire department and never find anything like this."

The 140-foot ship, officially commissioned yesterday, evokes the 343 firefighters killed on Sept. 11, 2001; the bow lettering was made from steel from the collapsed Twin Towers.

Many of the ship's high-tech elements were designed specifically for use in New York City waters, department officials said during a tour yesterday. Forward tanks can be filled to lower the deck as much as five feet to match the height of the Staten Island Ferry for a potential rescue. A rear 50-foot crane carries a water spout, flood lights, and a camera that could be used in a rescue effort like the one following the downing of US Airways Flight 1549 in the Hudson River last year, said Chief of Marine Operations James Dalton.

The \$27-million ship, paid for by the city and federal Homeland Security funds, has an air filtration and sealing system to protect firefighters from chemical, radiologic, or other airborne agents.

"It will be a lot of fun when we learn all the tricks," said engineer James Campanelli, 51, as he showed visitors the touch-screen and lines of joysticks that control the ship's water cannons,

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Video: See the new boat; hear from FDNY officials.
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known as monitors.

With the rocking ship serving as backdrop, FDNY Commissioner Salvatore Cassano declared it "the biggest in the nation and the most powerful in the world" at the commissioning ceremony.

At Pier 86, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said supplying the department with the latest tools was a fitting tribute to the 9-11 fallen. The boat "is literally forged from the heart and soul of the city and the FDNY," he said.

Near the close of the ceremony, Chief of Department Edward Kilduff issued the order: "Man the ship."

About 30 firefighters assigned to Three Forty Three filed onto the ship and lined three railings before saluting.

Once in service later this year, the boat will replace the 129-foot Marine I, also known as the John D. McKean, built in 1954 for \$1.4 million. Three Forty Three's sister ship, which is still undergoing sea trials, will replace Fire Fighter, which is based in Staten Island and has been in service since 1938.

From his 360-degree-view perch, pilot Charles Stauder, 51, of Babylon, said the boat, capable of 18 knots and shooting 50,000 gallons of water a minute, handled well when he and others piloted it from Panama City, Florida, this spring to New York. Training is ongoing, but he said it's done well in equipment tests from a temporary berth at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

"No one wants to be the first person to scratch it," he said. "Everyone is like 'Go slow,'" he said.