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ABANDONED MINE PROGRAM AIDS FIREFIGHTERS

(Salt Lake City, Utah) -- Spraying water is the time-tested method of dealing with fire, but it isn't always the answer. Chemicals do a better job on some fires and thanks to a donation from the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program a fire retardant mixture called FEM-12 will be distributed throughout Carbon and Emery counties. Two thousand gallons of the mixture has been given to the Price City Fire Department who will see it's distributed as needed.

"We've successfully used FEM-12 to quickly extinguish magnesium and tire fires, which are generally very difficult to control," said Price Fire Chief Paul Bedont. "We're grateful for the donation and will see that it's distributed to area fire departments for use."

A College of Eastern Utah professor developed the mixture to help extinguish underground coal fires. "Underground coal fires are notoriously difficult to put out," says Louis Amodt, a project engineer in the abandoned mine program. "Once a fire has started in coal, the sandstone will fracture allowing oxygen to enter the system and that means the fire keeps burning. It's a big problem."

That's where FEM-12 enters the picture. "In order to extinguish any fire you to have to do one of three things," explains Amodt. "Eliminate the fuel, the oxygen or the heat, and FEM-12 is a combination of salts and detergent type foaming agents that effectively smother a fire."

The abandoned mine program used the material in an experimental procedure in an attempt to extinguish an underground coal fire in Carbon County in 2002. Since that time the developer has refined the product making it more effective. That left the abandoned mine program with a small amount of the original formula.

"It didn't make sense to let the product go to waste," said Luci Malin, administrator of the abandoned mine program. "We hope this is a beneficial partnership that allows the state to aid communities that have a need for fire fighting chemicals."

Fifty-eight barrels of the chemical were transported to Price from a storage site in Salt Lake City. The Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program works to protect the public from the dangers of abandoned mines. There are an estimated 17,000 to 20,000 abandoned mines in Utah. For more information on abandoned mines go to www.ogm.utah.gov.

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