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"If Porsche built a firetruck, it would have moves like this."

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"SURE, THEY LOOK GLAMOROUS," says Portland, Ore., airport firefighter Pete Hallenius as his department's new "Slime Lime" Oshkosh Striker 4500 emerges from the fire station, "until you have to wash them." The \$1 million Striker 4500 is the airport's newest firefighting vehicle—a 58-ton colossus that can cross tarmacs at 70 mph to reach a burning aircraft and can fight that fire longer than any other Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting apparatus. "We always know where we're going," firefighter Ken Edwards says as he moves into the center driver's seat. "Each of the trucks has its assigned spot if there's a crash. We don't leave anything

to chance." I take a seat to Edwards's right, feeling the breathing apparatus in the backrest on my spine—it's there for a real firefighter in a real emergency, not for me. When Edwards fires up the Striker, the sound of the 950-hp diesel is muted; it rides back behind the 4500-gal water tank. On the roof is a high-reach turret for spraying a fire from at least 230 ft away. In front is another turret—both are aimed and operated from the cab using a joystick. Under acceleration, the Striker feels quick. But what's most surprising is how it changes direction so effortlessly. If Porsche built a firetruck, it would have moves like this.

Approaching the gas-fueled flames licking the fuselage of an aircraft mockup, the Striker brakes with uncanny stability despite all that water sloshing around. With a joystick controller in my sweaty palm, I aim the front turret and begin dousing the fire. When the pumps come on, the big diesel revs, and it's as if the Striker becomes one fiercely clenched muscle—the whole truck seems to be squeezing out water. And if water isn't enough, there's an onboard dry chemical system, Halotron I, and a foam system too. "We train every day," Edwards tells me. "And with any luck, we'll wear this truck out in training. Because the last thing you want is to actually need what this truck can do."



The Striker is designed to extinguish blazes, but with 17 in. of clearance, 16 in. of wheel travel and differential locks, it would be at home on a 4wd trail too.

OSHKOSH
STRIKER 4500
• Eight-wheel-drive
Aircraft Rescue Fire
Fighting Apparatus

Height
• 12 ft 6 in.

Weight
• 58 tons

Engine
• 950-hp Cat diesel
with 2400 lb-ft
of torque

Mega Factor
• Sprays 1250 gal
per minute from
4500-gal tank

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **NATHANIEL WELCH**

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