

INSURING HEROES

Fighting Fire With...Propellers?

(NAPSA)—There could be cool news for America's firefighters and the people they protect.

Recent technological innovations can make many fire departments' jobs easier and safer.

For example, America's busiest port, the 7,000-acre Los Angeles harbor, is patrolled in part by *Fireboat 2*, a 105-foot-long ship that can shoot a stream of water up to 600 feet. It can apply water or foam at waterline level and up under docks and wharves and deliver 38,000 gallons of water a minute. That's enough to fill a 20-by-50-foot swimming pool to a depth of five feet.

To get the job done, however, all that water has to go to the right spot. That's where *Fireboat 2* really shines. It can go forward, backward, sideways or at any angle with equal ease. Where other fireboats are dancing bears, *Fireboat 2* is a ballerina with 360 degrees of agility. She can practically pirouette.

The key to all this maneuverability is the use of two special propellers. Ordinarily, boats can be cumbersome. Their propulsion and control systems push against water, which moves backward as the vessel moves forward.

Compare this with a land-based fire truck. No matter how hard you step on the gas, the pavement underneath it stays put.

Traditionally, the propulsion (the propellers) and the control (the rudder) on a boat are two sep-



Fancy footwork in fire and water: This fireboat is much more maneuverable than most, so it can save more lives and property.

arate things. *Fireboat 2*, however, combines them, so the boat is equally effective in any position. This cycloidal propulsion system, as it's called, looks like a giant air conditioner fan equipped with only a few blades and set on end. The angle of each blade is mechanically controlled so that it can move in any direction. These Schneider propellers were created by a German company called Voith, long known for setting standards in paper technology, power transmission, engineering, power generation and industrial services.

The success of this ship is expected to encourage communities all over the country to get the same sort of system for their fireboats. That can mean many more lives and much more money may be saved.