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00:00:01,260 --> 00:00:05,359
NARRATOR: There aren't many fire stations
in the world with a fleet of armored personnel carriers

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00:00:05,359 --> 00:00:10,300
available, but there aren't many fire stations
that have to serve the space shuttle fleet

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00:00:10,300 --> 00:00:18,560
and its astronauts, either. NASA's Kennedy Space Center
firefighters used four of the tank-like M113s

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00:00:18,560 --> 00:00:21,960
to protect them and the astronauts in case of
an emergency.

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00:00:21,960 --> 00:00:27,880
On launch day, two would stand ready with
teams of firefighters inside to dash in and

6
00:00:27,880 --> 00:00:34,579
rescue the astronauts. Another was based near the launch
pad, empty, set up so the crews could drive

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00:00:34,579 --> 00:00:38,079
away from danger themselves. The fourth was a spare.

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00:00:38,079 --> 00:00:42,609
David Seymour, Battalion Chief, KSC Fire Department:
The reason for the M113 is for our rescue

9
00:00:42,609 --> 00:00:48,269
teams. For the astronauts, we needed an armored
vehicle in order for us to go from where we're

10
00:00:48,269 --> 00:00:52,499
stationed for launch to the pad and then up
to the top of the pad to perform

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00:00:52,499 --> 00:00:53,780
a rescue of the astronauts.

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00:00:53,780 --> 00:00:59,530
NARRATOR: An M113 weighs 11 tons and it is
steered with two levers that control the respective

13
00:00:59,530 --> 00:01:05,449
track. With its rumbling six-cylinder engine,
the vehicle doesn't accelerate so much as lunge.

14
00:01:05,449 --> 00:01:11,090
But it can go practically anywhere and offers
considerable protection. It's also amphibious,

15
00:01:11,090 --> 00:01:16,710
so it can go into the water and swim, although
that aspect is rarely employed for Kennedy's vehicles.

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00:01:16,710 --> 00:01:22,780
David Seymour: This just gives us the protection
from whatever environment we may be going into

17
00:01:22,780 --> 00:01:29,180
and then be evacuating from an emergency.
The drivers themselves, they are squeezed
in there like

18
00:01:29,180 --> 00:01:35,840
sardines, into where the drivers are. It's
very difficult to drive the M113 with your
full protection on.

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00:01:35,840 --> 00:01:41,700
With the mask on, with the helmet on top of
that, with the hatches closed, in the M113,

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00:01:41,700 --> 00:01:49,720
the driver's field of vision is very limited. They're looking
through about a six-inch by two and a half-inch prism as

21
00:01:49,720 --> 00:01:55,620
they're driving down the road or going to
the pad. During a launch, we're stationed
about nine-tenths

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00:01:55,620 --> 00:02:01,790
of a mile from the pad, we're the closest
people, humans, to the pad when the shuttle launches.

23
00:02:01,790 --> 00:02:09,479
Right around T-10, we will don the rest of
our gear put our air packs on, we'll get inside

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00:02:09,479 --> 00:02:14,889
the M113s, we'll call, let's button them up. We'll close
all the hatches, we'll close all the ramps.

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00:02:14,889 --> 00:02:20,379
We'll go on our intercom system so we can
talk to each other within the M113,

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00:02:20,379 --> 00:02:25,430
but also we have radios that we can hear out
to the, excuse me, to the NTDs if they were

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00:02:25,430 --> 00:02:30,120
to call us up for an emergency.
They kind of keep us informed
about what's going on at the pad because other

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00:02:30,120 --> 00:02:35,650
than the driver, and one person that's standing
in the commander's hatch to see,

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00:02:35,650 --> 00:02:40,709
no one else can see what's going on. We don’t
actually know it's launched until you see

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00:02:40,709 --> 00:02:42,969
it light up inside the M113.

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00:02:42,969 --> 00:02:48,299
NARRATOR: Every astronaut that has gone into space on a shuttle had learned to drive an

32
00:02:48,299 --> 00:02:51,049
M113 during training. Many have driven them several times.

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00:02:51,049 --> 00:02:56,040
The training was a standard part of the terminal countdown demonstration test, a launch day

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00:02:56,040 --> 00:02:58,680
dress rehearsal known as the TCDT.

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00:02:58,680 --> 00:03:03,439
David Seymour: We get them in there, we go through the procedures, we go through the

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00:03:03,439 --> 00:03:09,439
capabilities of the M113 and then they each get a chance to actually drive the vehicle in an emergency

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00:03:09,439 --> 00:03:16,779
situation where they're driving it over rough terrain, down roads, and I would say every single crewmember

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00:03:16,779 --> 00:03:23,450
absolutely loves it and we always invite back another time when they're not scheduled for a mission.

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00:03:23,450 --> 00:03:28,180
NARRATOR: The M113s were never used in a launch pad emergency, but were based near the pad

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00:03:28,180 --> 00:03:34,590
for each launch of the shuttle program's 30 years. Although never called on, the firefighters

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00:03:34,590 --> 00:03:38,599
who stood ready never felt the training or machinery
were wasted.

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00:03:38,599 --> 00:03:42,840
David Seymour: We are the only country in
the world that has a specialized rescue team

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00:03:42,840 --> 00:03:50,230
for the astronauts. So yes, all of us, and I think
I can speak for the whole team, are very proud