

The Quest for a Fire Police Vehicle

Part 3 of 3 in the series

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In the first part, we discussed the need for a Traffic Unit. In the second, we discussed a used vehicle. In this article, we'll discuss buying a new vehicle.

Funding is always an issue, until you figure out how much a used vehicle can actually cost. Buying a new vehicle can be done one of two ways – having the vehicle delivered ready-to-go, or buying a vehicle and you doing the work.

Buying a complete vehicle will remove many headaches, and many dollars from your bank account. With a complete vehicle, when something goes wrong, you call the dealer who sold you the truck and tell them to come fix it. You had to do lots of thinking prior to ordering the vehicle, but the more work you did beforehand, the less aggravation you have on the back end.

In the case of one FD, they looked at several vehicles. A regular van (\$22K) was nice, but would have needed shelving, plus it was somewhat small. A step-van (like a Fed-Ex truck) was unavailable. This FD was using a pick-up truck and with the cones and signs being unprotected in the bed against weather and theft, they looked at putting a cap on, obtaining a pull-out drawer, or at getting a "Squad 51" body. They also looked at a "plumber's van" – this has a van front end, but a box with side compartments on the back, looking like an ambulance without the weight of the cabinetry (this is more properly known as a Covered Utility Body).

The choice of vehicle has to be based on the actual anticipated need. In this case, they wanted to mount an arrow board, scene floodlights, put all their signs and several dozen cones. They also have barricades, portable floodlights, generators, water, an incident command board, tools, and other extra gear and equipment. They opted for the Covered Utility Body. Options desired included heavy-duty battery, heavy duty alternator, heavy duty cooling system, dual rear wheels, limited slip rear, and a mid-sized V-8. Power windows and door locks would have been a great set of options.

The vehicle was purchased through a local car/truck dealer. The emergency lights, siren, radios, and Variable-Message Sign (VMS) was installed by a local company at no labor cost, allowing for the use of LEDs and a siren enhancer (Federal Signal Rumbler). Another local company striped and lettered the vehicle. Yet another local company installed the inverter and periscope floodlights – see the pattern? If something breaks, they should have good response for repairs, and the systems are not overlapping, so the pointing of fingers should not occur.

The vehicle was put together over a period of months. Input was obtained from the users, and anyone not already EVOC trained was told to go get the program or not drive the Unit. Each operator was further given a driving log that documents his or her time

behind the wheel. Training was conducted and actual testing was done based on a fully encompassing rubric (list of tasks). Only those trained and who passed testing are authorized to take the Unit anywhere. The others within the organization not so blessed still receive training on various pieces of equipment carried by the Unit.

Total outlay - \$32K for the Utility Vehicle, \$7K for the lights/siren, \$3K for the graphics, \$11 for the large message board (not an arrow board, but an actual Variable Message Sign), \$10K for an inverter, two high-output periscope floodlights, and two high-output 12' tall tri-pod floodlights, \$2K for a pair of small portable generators to run the tri-pod lights, \$1K for radios, and around \$3K for cones, signs, & stop/slow paddles, and another \$1,000 for miscellaneous things like the toolbox, fire extinguishers, a step-stool, ICS board, first aid kit, etc. **Total \$70,000.** Given that an ambulance costs over \$100K and don't even get us started about the price of fire trucks...