

Last month, I shared with readers the cost of a deputy's uniform and personal equipment. This month, I provide the financial lowdown of the cost of a patrol vehicle and related equipment.

A patrol deputy responds to emergencies, prevents crime, enforces the law, and provides support services throughout the 401-square miles of Orange County. We use Dodge Chargers, equipped with a patrol package, which includes a Hemi engine, a heavy duty suspension, performance brakes, and specialized seats to accommodate duty belts. The vehicle's base price is \$30,000.

I am proud of the look of our fleet. We began phasing out our brown patrol cars in 2014, slowly replacing them with white Chargers. I subscribe to a forward moving philosophy; therefore I incorporate a star that appears to be moving forward into our new logo. I call it a dynamic star, and I like its clean, professional appearance. The graphics package, including installation, is \$1612.50 per car.

A siren alerts motorists when a deputy is responding to an emergency, and a speaker projects the deputy's voice when necessary. The siren, speaker, microphone holder, and mounting bracket cost \$1331.25. A cruiser also has front, side, and rear emergency lights for visibility and safety, and spot and alley lights for security sweeps and scene illumination. This lighting equipment, including the hardware, cables, power inverters, and cost of installation, adds \$3810.95 to the tally.

The patrol car is a mobile office. In it, a deputy receives and transmits information, writes reports, prints citations, enters information into statewide databases, makes phone calls, investigates incidents, and stays up-to-date on agency policy. The workhorses for these tasks are the in-car radio system (\$6000), and a laptop computer (\$2000) with a mouse (\$30) and printer (\$311.52). The computer must be securely mounted in the car (\$379) and the accompanying equipment is either housed within or mounted to a specially designed console box (\$693.49), which doubles as an arm rest and cup holder.

Patrol cars have a camera mounted on the dashboard which activates automatically when a deputy turns on the lights and siren; it also records a short amount of pre-event data. The dash camera's primary purpose is to record traffic stops, both for accountability and investigative purposes. A car also has a rear facing camera, used to capture activity and speech in the backseat when a deputy transports someone. The vehicle is modified for such purposes with the installation of a compartment (\$838.49) designed to keep people safe and secure during transport. The advantages of the in-car cameras go beyond visual documentation. The metadata they collect – data about data – are also crucial. The data include the date, time, speed, and GPS coordinates of the car. This is helpful, for example, if a deputy needs to go back and search for weapons or evidence a suspect may have thrown from his or her car during a chase. The cameras run about \$4000 for the pair. Cars are also equipped with a \$55 Geotab, a fleet management device that constantly collects information about the car, including whether it is on or off, its location, and how fast it is travelling.

Three kits (fingerprint, first aid, and evidence collection) are in every car. Each is also stocked with a flotation device, gas mask, fire extinguisher, and a disposable biohazard suit. Combined, these tools cost \$555. Although not every car has a radar unit, the percentage is significant enough that I include the \$2500 cost in the price of our hypothetical car, now totaling \$54,117.20.

There are three other pieces of equipment I want to mention, even though not all cars have them. Lidar is an instrument that uses laser technology to measure the speed of a motorist. Lidar is handheld, especially useful on crowded roadways, and costs \$3000. The second specialty device is an automated external defibrillator (AED). Sudden cardiac arrest is one of the biggest killers out there; we therefore need AEDs to effectively

protect and serve our community. Eventually, I want an AED in every patrol car, but at \$1,500 each, it will take some time to reach that goal. The third piece of equipment is a \$750 rifle, which requires a \$67.67 trunk mount.

So, here is the lowdown: most cars cost \$54,117.20 and some cost \$59,434.87. I hope this accounting increases your understanding of the complexity and variety of deputies' duties, and provides you an appreciation for the amount of equipment used in the performance of their professional responsibilities.