

SECURING EMERGENCY SERVICE VEHICLES AND STATIONS

In an August 2024 report, The Federal Bureau of Investigation provided information that from 2019 to 2023, the nationwide rate of motor vehicle theft incidents rose from 199.4 incidents per 100,000 people to 283.5 incidents per 100,000 people.



Emergency vehicles are not immune and present many potential opportunities for theft.

The damages resulting from the theft of emergency vehicles, including the specialized medical, rescue, and firefighting equipment on vehicles can be costly; and in some cases, losses of this nature have resulted in catastrophic injuries or fatalities. Furthermore, vehicle and equipment theft can occur anywhere. It is recommended that emergency

service organizations (ESO) consider the following concepts for securing their vehicles while in use and while parked at the station.

Securing ESO Vehicles

With increasing crime and terrorism throughout the world, it is critical that ESOs take proactive measures to help reduce the possibility of unauthorized use or theft vehicles and equipment. Consider the following to help ensure ESO vehicles are secure:

- Leave a crew member with the vehicle when idling.
- Shut off the engine and remove the ignition key from any vehicle left unattended.
- Install a commercial anti-theft or keyless entry device, if possible.
- Lock vehicles, equipment, and exterior storage compartments, whenever practical.
- Secure vehicles and contents when not in service or out for repair.

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Securing ESO Stations

ESO vehicles are also a target for theft and break-ins while at the station. These often include occurrences of equipment and medications being stolen from vehicles while parked inside the station. It is important that ESOs routinely review the physical security of their facilities, including emergency vehicle parking lots, garage bays, storage areas, and maintenance facilities. Consider the following to help ensure ESO stations are secure.

- Leave bay doors closed/down.
- Lock station entrances.
- Remove items utilized to prop open doors.
- Install recorded video surveillance systems.
- Evaluate adequacy of exterior perimeter lighting to reduce secluded areas.
- Remove or trim vegetation to permit maximum visibility.
- Consider perimeter fencing.

Conclusion

The theft or unauthorized use of emergency vehicles can result in the disruption of emergency services. If involved in subsequent collisions, theft can also cause damage to the vehicle and/or injury to others. ESO operations inherently present an increased potential for theft. Some common behaviors of ESO staff that can increase theft potential include leaving a vehicle unattended, unlocked, with keys in the ignition, and/or with the engine running. ESOs can reduce theft potential by ensuring emergency vehicles, equipment, and stations are properly secured whenever possible.