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During recent months, there has been much chatter about the end of life for the long-standing law enforcement icon: Ford's Police Interceptor built on the Crown Victoria platform. Many in our community have commenced to wring their hands with great vigor wondering how life will ever continue without the Crown Vic.

It is like a summer TV rerun, to me. I have watched this show before. It was back in the 90's when Chevrolet announced the end of the Caprice with the awesome Corvette engine. Some cops were certain that civilization would never again be the same. Fortunately, those pundits were wrong then and I suspect, they will be wrong now.

I recall all of the hoopla and showmanship of Ford's announcement of the NEW Police Interceptor. It happened in Las Vegas a short while ago. There were awesome pictures, wizardly engineers, super-hot looking models and cars that were spit-shined to the max. Ahem ...

I recall reading one article where it was said that the new Ford vehicle is, "like a Taurus on steroids." Ahem, again.

According to Ford, this new car was designed with much input from the law enforcement community. They had been instrumental in putting this new car on the ground. It will be better than anything that preceded it. Uh-huh.

Here is what you did NOT read in all of those press releases.

The street cops who were in Ford's focus group talked at length about the dangers of the Crown Vic due to all of the gear and equipment that their agencies add to the car, e.g. computer, camera, etc. They expressed deep concerns about the even smaller size of the new product. Ford's response: you'll just have to live with it.

Ford continues to put their collective heads in the sand: they only pay lip service to that after-market gear. The design of the interior of the car remains much like the consumer version of the product.

No one wants to talk about the elephant in the room: today's police car has become a death-trap for cops. The statistics prove the point. The new car from Ford will likely only ensure that we bury even more cops due to vehicle-related deaths.

What do you suppose the reaction would be if Ford offered to create a new vehicle for your Fire Department's EMS unit by upgrading a Ford Excursion? Right. Or maybe the next fire truck will be a Ford F-150 with a couple of water tanks strapped into the rear cargo area? Right, again. Un-huh, sure.

We do not hesitate to demand vehicles that are designed from the ground up for use by other first responders. But, it seems perfectly acceptable to give our cops a hand-me-down car that were never intended by their

concept design team to be used by cops.

## **DON'T ERASE THE CARBON**

By now, most have heard about Carbon Motors with their project vehicle, currently dubbed, "E7." It comes out of the factory with every piece of gear, technology and otherwise that will be needed. **THERE IS NOTHING INSTALLED BY THE AGENCY.** It even has heated/cooled cup holders!

There are wild stories circulating about the cost of the car being sky high. I want to give you a very brief financial analysis. Don't turn the page or tune out now. It's simple and you don't need to be a CPA to understand it.

There are some assumptions that I have used. These are not intended to be exact numbers, but you will get the idea. In each case, the car will be driven 40,000 miles a year.

For a Crown Vic:

- The car will cost \$20,000 new
- It will cost \$24,000 for the after-market gear and the cost to install it. (Statistics show this gear cost 1.2 times the price of the base car)
- The car has a life expectancy of 100,000 miles.
- The car will get between 11 – 12 miles per gallon on gasoline.
- Gas costs \$2.90 per gallon.

For the Carbon E7:

- The car will cost \$52,800 (again, my assumption, making it 20% more than the current cost of buying and equipping a police car)
- The car has a life expectancy of 250,000 miles.
- The EPA rating estimates are 30 miles per gallon on diesel fuel.
- Diesel fuel costs \$3.13 per gallon.

Some very easy calculations show the cost of ownership of each of these vehicles projected over five years. Using the assumptions above, the Carbon vehicle will save the agency \$75,328 over five years when compared to the Crown Vic.

Carbon's executive team suggests a more conservative approach. Rather than getting 250,000 miles out of the car, they suggest simply adding one year to the life of the vehicle currently in use. Second, rather than using the 30mpg rating from the EPA, they suggest simply increasing the mpg of the current car by 40%.

Using these much more conservative values, the Carbon vehicle still saves the agency \$24,124 over the Crown Vic.

## **SHIFITING THE PARADIGM**

Most of us are accustomed to moving the light bar and all other equipment from an old car to the new one, when we receive it. Why do we do that? Simply said: because that add-on gear lasts much longer than the car. Carbon will change that.

Here's something that could shake-up your finance guy. The Chicago Police Department is now simply scrapping old cars, equipment and all. Why? Because that is the cheapest thing to do.

**BELIEVE IT OR NOT:** It costs more to remove, repair, get a new installation kit and install old gear on a new car than it would to just buy new gear and throw the old stuff away. That is fact, not fiction – right from the finance department.

Second, the cost of selling old cars (we're talking about the people who do it, the cost of storage and everything else) is more than what Chicago gets when they sell old cars. So, Chicago PD is now just selling their old cars for their scrap value.

Is the picture starting to come into better focus now?

The Carbon E7 was intended only as a police vehicle from the moment it was first conceived. It is not some consumer car with a set of slip-covers stretched over the top to make it look a little different.

Because all of the equipment needed is designed into the car, there is less risk that the vehicle we drive will become what ends our career. All of it is there from the factory: the computer, the radar, the laser, the light bar and so on.

Using a vehicle that was designed from the tires up as a police car will keep names off The Wall in Washington D.C.

That's what I'm all about. How about you?

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