



By Jan Rahn
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The Perkins County Sheriff's Office has purchased a new vehicle with several amenities to better serve the county and make law enforcement duties run smoother.

A 2009 Ford Expedition 4-wheel drive patrol vehicle, which was ordered in April, was delivered over the summer and put into service on Sept. 28.

Perkins County Sheriff Jim Brueggeman said it took a couple of months to get it operational because equipment such as radio, radar, emergency lights, siren, and a center console where equipment is mounted had to be ordered and installed.

Then the vehicle was taken to Prairie States Communications in Imperial for a couple of days to be upfitted with the emergency equipment necessary for patrol.

There are several reasons behind the purchase of the vehicle which was bought through a Nebraska state contract at \$26,370:

- Another 4-wheel drive patrol unit was needed in addition to a 4-wheel drive pickup already in the fleet for the deputies to get around in inclement weather as well as the varied landscape's hills, fields, ditches and trail roads.

"The terrain here is rougher than people think," said Brueggeman.

- The new utility vehicle can carry more investigative equipment for traffic investigation and crime scene investigation.

The rear compartment can now accommodate cameras, measuring wheels, cones and flags for traffic investigations, and there is space for crime investigation kits to collect evidence from varying situations.

"It takes so many things, and now we can have a good supply to conduct any kind of crime investigation," said Brueggeman.

- The vehicle can be used to transport bodies to Scottsbluff for autopsy when there is an unattended death in the county.



A different vehicle was needed for transport to replace a hearse that had mechanical problems.

The new vehicle will now be used for such transports. The totes containing investigative equipment can easily be removed and the seats folded down to get a stretcher in the back.

When buying new equipment, Brueggeman said they always try not to use local tax dollars. The new radios were paid for by Homeland Security grant funds and the radar system was from the traffic diversion program (STOP) funds.

The new vehicle doesn't have a camera yet, but Brueggeman applied for a grant from the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety for the \$3,500 piece of equipment.

"I'm trying to limit local tax dollars put into this vehicle," said Brueggeman, "as with all vehicles,

by trying to get as much grant money as possible.”

Another feature of the new vehicle is a laptop mounted inside that was bought with Homeland Security funds. It enables law enforcement to get online at a scene to check background records, licenses, etc.

Although the cost of the new vehicle was \$4,000 more than a normal patrol car, Brueggeman said the advantages are that law enforcement will get a longer useful life out of it and studies indicate its resale value holds better than patrol cars.

The 2006 Charger that Brueggeman drove has been passed along to Chief Deputy Rick Dreiling. The old 2003 Crown Victoria will now go to auction.

The primary driver of the new vehicle will be Brueggeman, who puts on fewer miles doing administrative duties than the deputies do patrolling. It's important to keep miles down, he said, but the new 4-wheel drive, along with the pickup, will be available to the deputies for patrol when the weather is bad.