

Issue: Vehicle Rental for Incident Management Teams

Historical Background: The use of rental vehicles by Incident Management Teams, even though they are needed, has created a number of problems. These problems range from exorbitant use and cost, inappropriate type vehicles, vehicles sitting unused after arriving at the incident, and violation of agency contracts for vehicles. This area of concern was documented at the National Incident Business Practices Workshop in February 2004 by Contracting and EERA, and Accountability and Cost Workgroups. In May the Incident Business Working Team chartered a group of individuals to examine the use and need for rental vehicles at incidents and to determine an effective and efficient method of obtaining the most appropriate vehicles.

OBJECTIVE: Review overall vehicle use and needs by discussion with team members, host agencies, and/or cooperating agencies to determine their use and needs. Look at various mean of obtaining vehicles. This determination can be by any procurement instrument for example; other agencies, contracts, or establishing transportation units, Look at the overall vehicle needs by Incident management Teams and develop alternative methods for obtaining vehicles through various sources. The final report will include the following:

- Identify alternative solutions to the current method of obtaining vehicles.
- Identify the cost effective solution.
- Document vehicle use on different incidents.
- Determine which positions needed vehicles to perform their assigned incident function.

Alternative Solutions:

1. Current Agency Vehicles (this includes vehicles up for replacement but not sold,-GSA etc.)

PROS: Use GSA or other agency vehicles which are available or vehicles scheduled to be replaced. The use of these types of vehicles will have minimal cost. If GSA has vehicles in replacement status but not sold, they can be used at minimal cost. Liability is reduced to employees by not renting vehicles on their travel card. GSA vehicles could be obtained as available on an incident by incident basis between April and October of each year. Agency vehicles from other than GSA would have to be temporarily added to local fleets for the duration of the fire season.

CONS: GSA and agencies may not have additional vehicles or replacements may not be available for use. More information is required from GSA to be able to implement this solution. If vehicles were temporarily added to local fleets, the local budget would have to pay the monthly usage costs if there were no fires.

RECOMMENDATION: Convene a group consisting of fleet managers from various agencies and GSA, and people with Incident Ground Support experience to identify and clarify procedures necessary to make better use of GSA vehicles. Once procedures are identified, an operating procedure or handbook could be developed for incident procurement, buying teams, or local agencies to use.

2. Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements and Blanket Purchase Agreements.

PROS: Allows agencies to develop BPAs or EERAs for renting commercial vehicles without drivers, which can be used off-road. Eliminates travel card liability to employees.

CONS: The most successful use of EERAs and BPAs requires them to be set up by procurement person ahead of time and this coordination has not been very wide spread. Local rental agencies may not have vehicles or only a limited number of vehicles of the type needed for off-road use. Costs will be higher than agency vehicles. Often rental car companies will not sign EERAs or BPAs and will only rent using their own rental agreements using credit cards.

3. National or Regional vehicle contracts – vehicle rental agencies

PROS: Develop regional or national agreements for renting vehicles, which will reduce costs. The availability of vehicles would be guaranteed at specific locations. The off-road usage for these vehicles would be addressed in the contract. There would be common language for loss damage and destruction clauses which may help reduce payment of claims for damage. Eliminates travel card liability to employees.

CONS: Local or national contracting may reduce local agency flexibility for using local vendors. Costs will be higher than agency vehicles.

4. Rent Vehicles on Individual Travel Cards

PROS: Individuals get vehicle suited to their job assignment, and ensure vehicle is returned at the end of the assignment. No prior planning for incident vehicles is required.

CONS: Difficult to manage number, types and use of rental vehicles on an incident. Local rental agencies may not have vehicles. Off-road use is not authorized on standard rental agreements or under the DOD rental contract. There are numerous liability issues for both the agency and the person renting the vehicles that may include employee responsibility for payment of rental of and damage to the vehicle.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE:

1. Host agency needs to determine what method of vehicle transportation the incident management team is to use, prior to the order.
2. Incident management teams need to share vehicles while traveling to the incident base and pool vehicle use during the incident.
3. The number of incident management personnel that requires vehicles for actual job performance needs to be based on the type of incident and needs.
4. Vehicles should be selected as follows:
 - GSA or Agency vehicles or other internal or external replacement vehicles.
 - National Contract arrangements.
 - Local Contract arrangements (EERA or BPA).

Review of vehicle use on incidents:

We were not able to evaluate vehicle use on specific incidents because the final incident packages reside at the hosting units rather than a central location and there wasn't sufficient time or personnel available to research this. We did pull information from the payment database in Ogden for vehicles acquired under EERA and commercial rental agreements. This information is arrayed in the following table:

Pickups/SUVS

Type	# Orders	Amt Paid	Days Hired	Avg Daily Rate
4x2 1/2 T	10	\$ 12,571.64	79	\$ 159.13
4x2 1/4 T	5	\$ 6,548.39	41	\$ 159.72
4x2 3/4 T	16	\$ 19,194.20	103	\$ 186.35
4x2 Compact	2	\$ 1,460.16	37	\$ 39.46
4x4 1/2 T	38	\$ 23,691.85	312	\$ 75.94
4x4 1/4 T	23	\$ 31,713.62	205	\$ 154.70
4x4 3/4 T	53	\$ 36,783.00	377	\$ 97.57
4x4 Compact	2	\$ 556.74	6	\$ 92.79
SUV	6	\$ 2,860.86	35	\$ 81.74
Pickup Total	155	\$135,380.46	1195	\$ 113.29

Rental Vehicles

Type	# Orders	Amt Paid	Days Hired	Avg Daily Rate
All	93	\$ 60,142.85	936	\$ 64.26

Notes:

- Pickups & SUVs are signed up by individual vehicle owner and generally receive daily rate + mileage on EERA (Driver not included)
- Rental Vehicles are generally signed up by Rental Car companies and receive daily rate w/unlimited mileage

-These figures are from *Forest Service* EERAs paid by the Ogden Payment Center during Fire Season 2004 - these do not include any payments made in Camino, CA for 2004 (i.e. R5, R6)

Conclusions:

- Rental vehicles can be less expensive than other methods of obtaining vehicles, but managing the number of vehicles and assuring prompt return has caused unnecessary costs in the past.
- Use of GSA vehicles and agency owned vehicles are likely the least costly method of providing vehicles; however, use of agency vehicles requires planning before fire season to have vehicles on hand. If fire season doesn't meet expectations, local programs would have to cover the additional costs out of appropriated funds.
- Acquiring vehicles through the use of BPAs or EERAs by national, regional, or local rental companies will provide vehicles to meet incident needs at reasonable cost, but rental companies may not have the right compliment of vehicles available when the agencies have a need. This option also requires planning and acquisition actions before fire season.
- Managing the number of individuals on incidents that have vehicles will also reduce vehicle costs. While many positions require vehicles, many others do not.