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Resource Management: Tracking Emergency Response Vehicles

SUMMARY

Jurisdictions should consider acquiring an automatic vehicle locator (AVL) system to track the locations of vehicles from a central location. This can help emergency managers keep track of emergency vehicles during large-scale incidents.

DESCRIPTION

Arlington County, Virginia did not have an AVL system for tracking its emergency vehicles when terrorists attacked the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Communications problems, self-dispatching units, and the sheer number of units involved in the immediate Pentagon response rendered the county's normal method of tracking units by radio ineffective. Emergency managers had difficulty determining which units were on site or where they were located.

The inability of emergency managers to track response vehicles had several consequences. Responders scheduled to use vehicles sometimes found that the vehicle had been commandeered for other purposes. Emergency managers and dispatchers had difficulty locating units that had been commandeered or had self-dispatched. Eventually, two firefighters had to be sent by foot to record every fire truck, police car, and ambulance on site.

Jurisdictions should consider acquiring an automatic vehicle locator (AVL) system to track the locations of vehicles from a central location. This can help emergency managers keep track of emergency vehicles during large-scale incidents.

CITATION

Titan Systems Corporation. *Arlington County After-Action Report on the Response to the September 11 Terrorist Attack on the Pentagon*. 30 May 2002.
https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=483

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