



Open Source Brief

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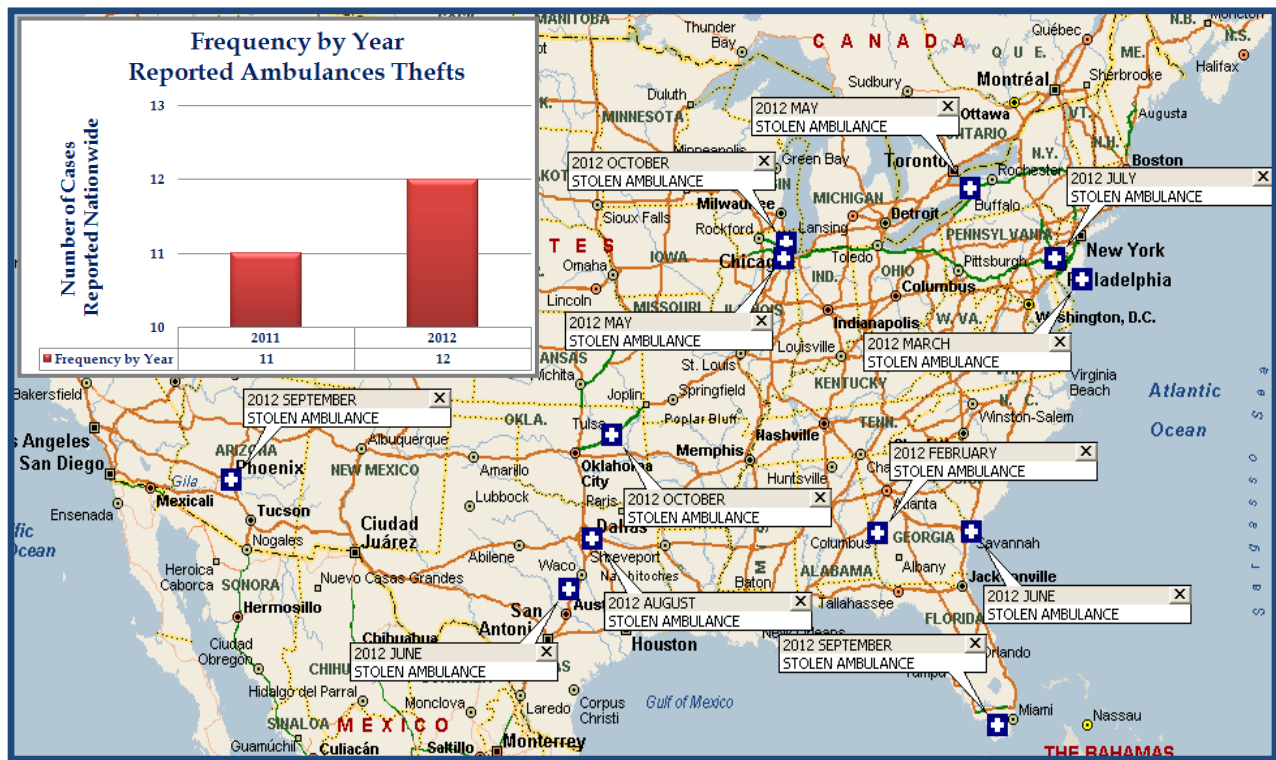
~Nationwide Analysis~ Increasing Trend of Unoccupied Ambulance Thefts

The purpose of this brief is to provide Central Florida's emergency services community; Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), paramedics, public safety officials, ILOs and private sector ambulance personnel, with awareness and analysis that supports an identified trend concerning incidents of unoccupied ambulance thefts occurring across the country.

BACKGROUND:

(U//FOUO) The Central Florida Intelligence eXchange (CFIX) recently received a brief from the Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center (ACTIC - TLO Program) that included a report of a stolen ambulance in Phoenix, AZ. At the request of an Intelligence Liaison Officer (ILO) in the Central Florida region (R-5 Hospital/Medical Sector), CFIX was asked to collect, research, analyze and develop a 'Situation Brief' based on this report to determine if this was a significant trend that could cause concern for Region 5 partners.

U.S. Map of Reported Unoccupied Ambulance Thefts 01/2012 - 10/2012



CASE STUDIES:

- Chicago, (IL) - On October 09, 2012, a **man took off in an ambulance parked in front of a hospital** in Berwyn and drove 10 miles before being stopped by police. **He stole the ambulance while paramedics assisted hospital staff with a patient.** Two paramedics were suspended and may face disciplinary action for leaving the ambulance unattended and the keys inside. (Source: Chicago Tribune)



- Tulsa, (OK) - On October 01, 2012, as paramedics were on a medical call at an apartment complex, an **intoxicated man jumped in the ambulance and attempted to back up hitting three vehicles.** Paramedics pulled him out of the driver's seat. The man tried to run but paramedics held him until law enforcement arrived. He was arrested and booked into the Tulsa County Jail. (Source: KJRH News)
- Phoenix, (AZ) - On September 21, 2012, a 26-year-old female (pictured below) **stole an ambulance that was left running in front of a Phoenix hospital.** An on-duty reserve officer spotted the ambulance; however, the suspect refused to stop. **Officers also tried to negotiate using the ambulance radio.** Officers finally stopped her by blocking the roads creating a barricade with their vehicles where she was arrested and taken into custody. (Source: ACTIC)



- Monroe County, (FL) - On September 02, 2012, a 22-year-old suspect was arrested and charged **after jumping into an ambulance and taking off.** Officers spotted and pursued the ambulance that **had its lights on but no siren** after receiving reports that it was stolen. The suspect admitted to stealing the ambulance to gain attention from law enforcement after she was unable to locate her friend. (Source: Firehouse.com)

- Dallas, (TX) - On August 26, 2012, a man **stole an ambulance after paramedics left the engine idling as they searched for an injured person in an apartment complex.** They never found the 9-1-1 caller and when they returned the ambulance was gone. Police tracked the vehicle back to the suspect, where he was arrested and charged. **A pair of crutches and a backpack that did not belong to paramedics were also found inside the ambulance.** (Source: dallasnew.com)

[Analyst Comment: Although officials from Dallas have not confirmed if the 9-1-1 caller was the same individual who stole the ambulance, paramedics and EMTs should be vigilant and aware of this activity, to prevent a crime of opportunity from occurring.]

- Montgomery County, (PA) - On July 26, 2012, a suspect was caught on dashboard surveillance video (pictured right) **after he jumped into an ambulance and drove off as EMTs were preparing to transport a patient to the hospital.** Responder lights were

still activated as the suspect prompted traffic to move and passed through the red lights. **The suspect was able to monitor police transmissions** with the radio equipment that was mounted in the ambulance console to avoid law enforcement. Law enforcement later found the ambulance abandoned in an apartment complex parking lot. (Source: ABC News) →



- Killeen, (TX) - On June 21, 2012, a man was arrested and charged for **stealing an ambulance while paramedics were inside a residence responding to an emergency call.** Shortly after the paramedics noticed the ambulance missing, the suspect came back to the residence, stepped out and walked away stating **he just wanted to take a "joyride" in an ambulance.** The suspect was arrested at the scene. (Source: KWTX.com)

- Savannah, (GA) - On June 8, 2012, while under police supervision at a Georgia hospital, a man **assaulted a deputy, stole an ambulance** and led police on a low-speed pursuit. The suspect struggled with the deputy, attempted to remove a gun from his holster, **climbed into an unlocked ambulance and then drove away.** The officers attempted to stop the suspect by using stop sticks which flattened three tires, while the ambulance hit vehicles along the way. Patrol cars were also damaged, but no one was injured. (Source: WFMY News)

- Chicago, (IL) – On May 27, 2012, a woman was arrested for **stealing an ambulance from a Chicago hospital and crashing into a vehicle** several blocks away. She was injured in the crash and taken into custody for stealing the ambulance, driving on a suspended license and D.U.I. (Source: Chicago Tribune)
- Buffalo, (NY) - On May 21, 2012, an intoxicated 37-year-old Harvard University graduate student **stole an ambulance from the patient unloading ramp in front of a hospital emergency room while she awaited for a medical evaluation.** She fled when law enforcement attempted to stop her which led to a pursuit. **The suspect lost control of the stolen ambulance causing it to slam into a brick wall in a Walgreens parking lot (pictured right), slightly missing the store.** She was arrested and charged with reckless endangerment, criminal possession of a stolen vehicle and a list of other charges. (Source: WGRZ News)



- Atlantic City, (NJ) – On March 19, 2012, a **man stole an ambulance from outside a hospital emergency room entrance and drove it to a bar 40 miles away.** Police used the **Global Positioning System (GPS) tracker to follow the stolen ambulance** where they found it abandoned in front of the bar. Investigators were looking into identifying the suspect. (Source: UPI.com)
- Columbus, (GA) – On February 21, 2012, a 36-year-old **hospital psychiatric patient took off with an ambulance crashing it into a business.** The paramedic was tending to a patient, with the **ambulance still running and the doors locked when the suspect broke a window and took off in the ambulance.** The suspect was later treated and arrested. (Source: WRBL News)

[Analyst Comment: Leaving an ambulance running or in idle with the doors locked is a common standard for operations with many ambulance companies. Analysis of this information is not to advise on changes to agency/organizational operational protocols, although is intended to provide situational awareness to paramedics, EMTs, first responders and hospital intake personnel.]



ANALYSIS:

(U//FOUO) In all of the ambulance theft cases analyzed in this brief, similar pre-incident indicators were identified. All of the documented cases had one or more of the following commonalities:

- ✓ The ambulance was left unattended;
- ✓ Keys were left in the ignition;
- ✓ The ambulance was left running;
- ✓ Many of the thieves were under the influence of drugs or alcohol; and
- ✓ Most thefts occurred while on scenes or parked on ambulance ramps at hospitals

IMPLICATIONS:

(U//FOUO) Although the cases included in this brief did not transpire within the Central Florida region, it implies that ambulance thefts could potentially occur in any jurisdiction where hospitals or ambulatory services are present. There are critical vulnerabilities associated with these thefts that could impact the emergency services sector, specifically pertaining to the safety of the public, homeland security concerns and monetary loss.

- PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

(U//FOUO) The safety of the traveling public as well as pedestrians could be at risk if a subject takes off in an ambulance, especially when under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In most cases mentioned in this brief, crashes and injuries did occur due to speed and inexperience of the suspect driver. Another consideration is protocols for backup measures for a patient in need of immediate transport or care in the event an ambulance is stolen during a medical emergency. The equipment onboard or transport time may be critical for the patient's care and may be the difference of a life or death situation.

- HOMELAND SECURITY CONCERNS

(U//FOUO) The majority of theft cases involving ambulances typically conclude as an act of criminal behavior, usually involving intoxication. There are concerns however, among counterterrorism authorities that stolen ambulances could be cloned for carrying out terrorist attacks or other criminal/malicious activity. In 2008, for example, a paramedic working the Republican National Convention (RNC) in St. Paul, MN spotted an ambulance with unusual markings. When law enforcement searched the unlocked cloned ambulance, they found a large cache of weapons, as well as bags of urine and feces that potentially could have transitioned into a mass casualty event.



[Analyst Comment: Overseas, terrorists have also used stolen or cloned ambulances to carry out secondary and tertiary attacks as first responders arrive on scene. The threat to carry out similar attacks in the US has been widely discussed on extremist forums.]

- MONETARY LOSS

(U//FOUO) The financial liability of an ambulance that is stolen or taken on a “joyride” causing property damage and injuries could be a significant cost to the agency/organization. The majority of ambulances are fully stocked with medication, medical supplies and equipment which if stolen can be an estimated loss of over \$175,000. While most of the supplies are reusable, the equipment may be damaged and electronics such as cardiac monitors may have to be recertified before placing back into service. It can take a considerable amount of time to have a replacement ready for deployment. In addition to these losses, smaller ambulance companies should consider the financial impact of losing such critical resources like specialized equipment or an Advanced Life Support (ALS) vehicle, which could affect overall operations.

(U//FOUO) The analysis conducted in this brief is being provided to emergency services personnel for situational awareness regarding a nationwide trend related to unoccupied ambulance thefts. CFIX encourages further dissemination of this brief to those with a valid need-to-know within the emergency services, medical, public safety and fusion center communities. **This brief is not for publication or media release.** To report similar trends or suspicious activity, please contact CFIX for further analysis at 407-858-3950 or CFIX@OCFL.NET.

WEB SOURCES:

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<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/05/female-harvard-student-accused-of-stealing-ambulance/>

<http://www.digtriad.com/rss/article/231731/176/Man-Attacks-Deputy-Lead-Chase-In-Stolen-Ambulance>

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-05-28/news/chi-city-ambulance-stolen-from-south-side-hospital-20120527_1_chicago-fire-department-ambulance-city-ambulance-judge-israel-desierto

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<http://www2.wrbl.com/news/2012/feb/21/stolen-ambulance-crashes-auto-shop-ar-3273870/>

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<http://www.thehomelandsecurityblog.com/2009/06/23/ambulance-theft-a-valid-concern/>



The Central Florida Intelligence eXchange (CFIX) is an all-hazards fusion center dedicated to the safety and security of our emergency responders, Intelligence Liaison Officers (ILOs) and fusion partners within Region 5 of the Domestic Security Task Force.

For more information or comments regarding this brief please contact:

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NOTE: This fusion product may contain information that still requires additional research and validation. Any new information will be forwarded as it is identified. The accuracy of this information is based solely on the sources from which it was derived. This information is being provided for first responder situational awareness.