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Bomb dog General Grant pokes his head out of his special compartment for a nuzzle with his handler, Senior Security Officer Henry Solis.



Photos by Harold Torres

It's A Dog's Life! Transporting Metro's K-9s in Safety and Comfort

- Non-Revenue mechanics designed, built special vehicle compartments

By HAROLD TORRES

(Dec. 21, 2005) The recent addition of two K-9 bomb dogs, Napoleon and General Grant, to the Metro Security force created a unique demand for special vehicles to transport the animals.

Napoleon, who is assigned to Security Officer Gustavo Lozano, and General Grant, who is assigned to Senior Security Officer Henry Solis, require vehicles that afford them a place to rest while they commute from their handlers' homes to their work assignments.

In transit, they require safety, protection, ventilation and comfort.





Two new Ford Crown Victoria sedans are outfitted with K-9 compartments.

Metro Security asked the Non-Revenue Department to outfit two new Ford Crown Victoria sedans to meet the call of duty for the hard-working dogs.

Mechanics Rand Hodges and Mark Garcia developed a creative plan for equipping the handler's vehicles, assembled the unit and installed custom wiring to convert the interior spaces to accommodate the dogs.

Provides utmost protection

Unique features include an interior space that is custom-made for K-9 habitat. The aluminum construction is designed to provide the utmost protection for the animals while allowing for maximum ventilation with its grille-work panels.

Flooring in the compartments is a special rubber mat that the dogs can comfortably lay down on and grip with their claws for stability.

There are no sharp edges on the interior surfaces and doorways that could cause injury. The entire construction is powder-coated white to keep the interior temperature down and to aid in identifying any injuries the dogs may have received.

The vehicles are equipped with two ventilation fans. One is an interior fan that circulates the cool air or heat from the front seats into the dog's area. The other is a special window fan that can be turned on with the window rolled down for maximum cross-ventilation.

A key feature is the "Hot-N-Pop" safety system. The handler can set the desired interior temperature he feels is safe for his dog. When the handler leaves the dog inside the vehicle, temperature



K-9 compartment view.



Cage is part of the door.

sensors continuously monitor the interior.

Beeper notifies the officer

If the preset maximum temperature is reached, the side windows automatically roll down and the door window fan starts working. If the temperature continues to escalate, a special beeper notifies the officer that the vehicle interior temperature has become critical.

In the event the officer can't make it to the vehicle before the dog would be affected by heat exhaustion, the door will automatically open and release the animal.

There also is an interior light and, most importantly, a sliding front panel that allows the dog to put his head forward so he can get that much-deserved reward for a job well done.

"It's really nice, makes it easy on the handler," says Solis, who noted that he previously used a makeshift arrangement with bungee cords for transporting his dog.

But, with the new, custom-made unit, he said, "So far, Grant's always smiling!"



Special window fan can be turned on with the window rolled down for maximum cross-ventilation.



K-9 compartment view



K-9 compartment view.



"Hot-N-Pop" safety system monitors the temperature when the dog is left inside the vehicle.