

## Any Police Cars You See May Be Used Against You



CAR 2012, WHERE ARE YOU? Chevrolet Caprice Police Patrol Vehicle.

By Don Sherman, May 23, 2010

LATE next year, when the last in a long line of Crown Victoria Police Interceptors rolls off a Ford assembly line in Canada, many police officers will have cause to be wistful: a mostly beloved comrade will be shuffling off to retirement.

The departure of the Crown Vic, a mainstay of police fleets for two decades, creates an opening that several new recruits are eager to fill.

Here are some cars that perpetrators of the future are likely to be seeing, with police lights flashing, in hot pursuit:

**FORD POLICE INTERCEPTOR** To maintain its status as the Broderick Crawford of enforcement units, Ford, which has a lock on three-quarters of the nation's 60,000 annual cruiser sales, has a replacement already at the academy.

The Police Interceptor, a specially configured 2012 Taurus intended to inherit the Crown Vic's baton, will be offered with a 365-horsepower twin-turbo V-6 and all-wheel drive, or with a 263-horsepower naturally aspirated V-6 and front-wheel drive.

Expect some consternation among the uniformed masters of the bootleg turn — the police version of an about-face. Officers have long preferred cruisers with rear-wheel drive.

Ford's goal is to maintain performance while increasing gas mileage with a smaller, harder-working V-6 in place of the Crown Vic's thirsty V-8. The company hasn't announced fuel economy figures for the new Interceptor, but ratings are likely to rise by a couple of miles per gallon.

Ford is also working on a related vehicle based on the next-generation Explorer, an S.U.V. that shares chassis and powertrain parts with the Taurus.

Enthusiast magazines have clocked the 0 to 60 m.p.h. acceleration of the civilian-edition Taurus SHO, whose powertrain is similar to the more muscular version of the Interceptor, at 5.7 seconds and put the top speed at 130 m.p.h. (The latest Ford Mustang GT easily tops both figures.)

To prep the Taurus for police duty, engineers added a column shifter for the 6-speed automatic transmission, along with larger brakes, extra cooling capacity and a more potent alternator to power the lights and communications equipment. Larger grille and wheel openings provide air for cooling.

The rear doors swing open an extra 10 degrees to help usher detainees into confinement. The bottom cushions of the front seats are contoured to accommodate bulky utility belts. Protective plates are embedded in the seatbacks to thwart stabbing attacks.

The new Interceptor will have to overcome two potential drawbacks, at least in perception — the lack of either V-8 power or rear-wheel drive — as it vies with two, or possibly three, other challengers to the Crown Vic's throne.

**DODGE CHARGER** The Crown Vic's demise is great news for Dodge. In the five years the Charger has been available to police agencies, its thumping Hemi V-8 and agile rear-drive chassis have earned it a solid second place in sales.

Performance tests by the Michigan State Police last fall put the 370-horsepower Charger V-8 at the head of 2011 models with the quickest acceleration, the highest top speed and the second-best braking (after a Charger V-6).

Like all factory-developed cruisers, the Charger has heavy-duty cooling, a high-capacity electrical system and a tougher chassis. The speedometer is calibrated to 160 m.p.h. and a meter tracks hours of engine use. Early next year, a revamped Charger arrives with fresh styling and improvements to the chassis and powertrain. The police package will include more efficient V-6 and Hemi V-8 engines.

**CHEVROLET CAPRICE POLICE PATROL VEHICLE** Rising to the competitive challenge, Chevy has dusted off the Caprice nameplate last used in 1996 and pinned it on a rear-drive cruiser. The Caprice P.P.V. is due to arrive early next year to serve cheek-by-jowl with police editions of the Impala sedan and Tahoe S.U.V.

The 2012 Caprice is actually a Pontiac G8 GT sport sedan with a facelift and other alterations needed for the police beat. The Australian-built G8 was recently discontinued when the Pontiac division was shut down. During the two model years the G8 was offered in the United States, fewer than 40,000 were sold despite mostly glowing reviews in the enthusiast press.

Chevrolet will sell the Caprice with both a 355-horsepower 6-liter V-8 and a more fuel-efficient V-6. According to factory specifications, the car will have nearly four more inches of rear legroom than the Crown Vic, along with an ample 18 cubic feet of trunk space.

Relocating some of the radio gear to the trunk clears the dash for a touch-screen computer monitor. The driver's seat has been specially sculptured — based on extensive field tests — to comfortably accommodate the holstered pistol, handcuffs and Taser weapons that officers typically carry. The car also has lockout switches for the power windows and door locks.



**CARBON MOTORS E7** If the ambitious plans of a start-up company in Connersville, Ind., materialize, a true dark-horse alternative will report for police duty in three years. Carbon Motors says the E7 would be the first purpose-built law-enforcement vehicle.

By starting from scratch instead of retrofitting an existing family sedan, Carbon can incorporate a long wish list of special features. An aluminum space frame cloaked with composite-plastic body panels is engineered to provide strength and crashworthiness with a relatively svelte unloaded weight of 4,000 pounds.

The E7 prototype is the same width and a foot shorter than the Crown Vic. And it is six inches taller for easier entry and more visual intimidation. A 122-inch wheelbase — 7.4 inches longer than the Crown Vic's — also provides extra interior space. The E7's 20-cubic-foot trunk is only slightly smaller than the Crown Vic's.

To rejigger the traditional performance-versus-efficiency equation, Carbon has contracted with BMW to provide a 3-liter twin-turbo 6-cylinder diesel engine rated at more than 250 horsepower and more than 400 pound-feet of torque. With a 6-speed automatic transmission manufactured by ZF and calibrated by BMW, the E7 is said to be capable of 28 to 30 m.p.g. in combined city-highway driving, according to the manufacturer, a 50 percent improvement over the gasoline-powered Crown Vic.

Carbon says the E7 will accelerate from a stop to 60 m.p.h. in 6.5 seconds and have a top speed above 150 m.p.h. Back doors hinged at the rear are intended to make it easier to load suspects. The rear-seat compartment is one seamless plastic molding, easing cleanups and eliminating hiding places for contraband. Centrally anchored seat belts temporarily latch onto the center partition so the arresting officer can secure them with minimal exposure to uncooperative suspects.

The exterior is designed with molded-in black-and-white identification and integrated emergency lighting. Prominent bumper bars can push disabled vehicles and spin out fleeing suspects using the P.I.T. (pursuit immobilization technique) maneuver familiar to late-night viewers of police reality shows.

A substantial partition separates the front and rear seating areas; shotgun mounts are built in. The rear seat can be fitted with surveillance equipment and sensors capable of detecting biological and chemical weapons and radiation threats. Ballistic protection is available for the front doors and the dash.

Carbon's engineers have also planned advanced electronic gear: infrared cameras for enhanced night vision, a means of reading and cross-referencing hundreds of license plates a minute and a console printer to produce speeding tickets expeditiously.

In its seven years, Carbon Motors has raised venture capital, secured a manufacturing plant, built a running prototype and taken 13,000 reservations. What it needs to begin production is a \$310 million loan from the Energy Department. The department's Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing Loan Program has already doled out \$8.5 billion for hybrid and electric cars.

[\*Wheels Blog: Hot Pursuit: What's Your Favorite Cop Car From TV or the Movies?\*](#)

## What's Your Favorite Cop Car from TV or the Movies?



A scene from "The Blues Brothers."

In this Don Sherman's article *The Next Generation of Police Cruisers* — he took a look at the cars that will be vying to replace the Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor, which will cease production late next year, as the favorite ride of the men and women in blue.

The Crown Vic has had an exceptionally long run as a police car — some two decades — but there have been other stalwarts in other periods. Consider, for instance the Dodge Monacos of the late 1970s, which crashed onto the screen — literally — in "The Blues Brothers" the 1980 John Belushi-Dan Aykroyd funk fest.

Need we mention that Jake and Elwood's very own [Bluesmobile](#) was a decommissioned Dodge patrol car? (Elwood's description: "It's got a cop motor, a 440-cubic-inch plant. It's got cop tires, cop suspension, cop shocks. It's a model made before catalytic converters, so it'll run good on regular gas." The cigarette lighter, alas, wasn't up to snuff.)

Police cruisers have long been prominent on screen, some almost becoming characters themselves. Here are some that we remember from television and the movies. What others can you add?



1. [“Highway Patrol”](#) (1955-59) The Buicks and Dodges driven by Broderick Crawford.
2. [“The Andy Griffith Show”](#) (1960-68) Mayberry’s 1961 Ford squad car.
3. [“Dragnet”](#) (1967-70) Joe Friday’s 1966 Ford Fairlane.
4. [“The French Connection”](#) (1971) Popeye Doyle’s 1971 Pontiac LeMans, taken from a civilian.
5. [“Smokey and the Bandit”](#) (1977) Buford T. Justice’s 1977 Pontiac LeMans
6. [“Knight Rider”](#) (1982-86) Knight Industries 2000, or K.I.T.T., a modified Pontiac Firebird.
7. [“Miami Vice”](#) (1984-85) Ferrari Daytona Spyder.
8. “Miami Vice” (1986-89) Ferrari Testarossa.
9. [“RoboCop”](#) (1987) 1986 Ford Taurus. Well, it seemed futuristic at the time.
10. [“I, Robot”](#) (2004) 2035 Audi RSQ.