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Ripon Police repainting patrol car fleet with prisoners at bargain basement price

Glenn Kahl

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RIPON — Ripon's two dozen police cars are getting a brand new look — one at a time — for the price of the paint and half price on the decals as an alternative to buying new vehicles that are not in the budget. First Sergeant Steve Merchant said that regional inmates volunteered to paint the vehicles as the city budget would allow the expense. It is important for the public to know we are not driving around new cars with the present economic downturn, he added. The paint has been peeling off the police fleet due to a problem in the manufacturing process and many of the vehicles are looking pretty bad, Merchant said. There was no cost in designing the new graphics represented in the decals on the sides of the vehicles and a badge with a star in the center mounted on the front panels of the units. Officer Paul Rourick did the design work for the city rather than having it sent out to a graphic designer that would have increased the drain on the budget. The cost of painting the cars is about one-quarter the going rate, Merchant explained, and the decals were created by Economy Signs of Manteca at half price. The first car to be upgraded — a 2004 Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor — was one that is assigned to Officer Alex Burgos that has some 93,000 miles on its odometer. There are only three cars that have been upgraded at this time, Merchant said, and the others will be done as the budget allows. Ripon allows its officers to take their cars home when they are off duty and park them in front of their residences — all 24 of them. They are also urged to take them to the bank or to the grocery store when they are shopping, creating a high profile in the neighborhoods and in the business community.

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