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Broadalbin ambulance on emergency call stolen; thief still sought

By Jason Subik (Contact) Gazette Reporter

Saturday, May 30, 2009

Text Size: A | A | A

BROADALBIN – The Fulton County Sheriff’s Department is looking for whoever stole the only ambulance of the Broadalbin Volunteer Ambulance Corps during an emergency medical response on May 16 and smashed it into a tree.

Sheriff Thomas Lorey said the ambulance corps answered a call at a home on Ridge Road at around 2 a.m. that Saturday. Lorey said the two ambulance corps emergency medical technicians were administering aid to a person inside the house when someone stole their ambulance right out of the driveway.

“Someone found the ambulance running and took it for a ride. They smashed it,” Lorey said.

Officials said the ambulance was driven for 1.9 miles and then dumped at the intersection of Honeywell Corners and Ridge Road.

BVAC President Lisa Weiderman said the thief did \$5,000 worth of damage to the rear of the ambulance and all but a \$500 deductible is covered by insurance. She said her organization is going to purchase a “secure idle” device for about \$400, which will enable ambulance drivers to keep their vehicles idling during emergency calls but undrivable after they remove the keys.

“With this device the keys can be pulled and the engine left running, but if somebody gets into the driver’s seat and engages the brake or the gas pedal, the engine cuts out,” Weiderman said. “There are [ambulance corps] in more metropolitan areas that have those installed.”

Lorey said the Ambulance Service of Fulton County has a mutual aid contract with BVAC and happened to show up just as the thief was pulling out of the driveway with the ambulance.

Weiderman said the Fulton County ambulance took the patient to a hospital. She said it was lucky the patient hadn’t been having a more severe medical emergency.

“If this had been a critically injured person or a cardiac arrest, somebody would have died,” Weiderman said.

Lorey said the Sheriff’s Department has interviewed several people in its investigation but hasn’t assembled enough evidence to charge anyone. He said the charge would likely be grand larceny for the ambulance but probably wouldn’t include any further charge connected to endangering the life of the person in medical distress.

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He said he's hoping someone from the public can help his investigation.

"So far we're coming up empty. We're hoping anybody who's heard any stories about it will contact us. This is the kind of thing somebody would have had to brag about to somebody that they did it," Lorey said

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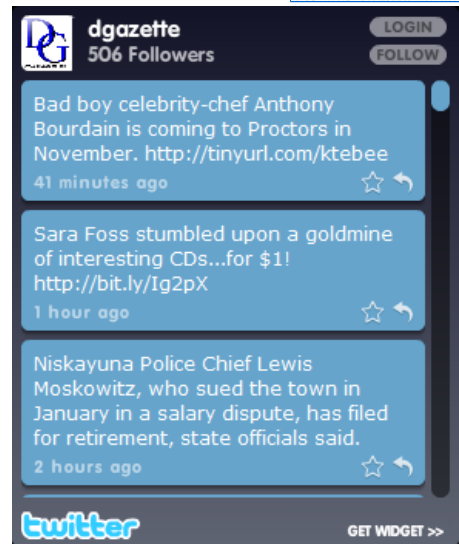
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May 30, 2009 7:05 a.m. [Suggest removal] annarondac (no real name given) says... This is extremely alarming. What would one do with an emergency vehicle, except for the thrill of stealing it? Is that thrill worth the possible death of someone who needs this service? I hope justice is served on these miscreants.

May 31, 2009 1:04 a.m. [Suggest removal] localyokel (no real name given) says... The simple solution is to not leave the ambulance running when it's empty and personnel aren't nearby. Why is that necessary? It takes 5 seconds or less to start a vehicle. Period. No one will die because the ambulance driver has to start the vehicle. Get real. It's a waste of money to pay \$400 for a "secure idle" device. Quit wasting gasoline, too. No wonder local governments are going broke.

May 31, 2009 7:11 a.m. [Suggest removal] concernedbystander (no real name given) says... It is a shame that someone would be stupid enough to do this and possibly think of it as a joy ride. It is even more troubling to think that the President of the corps thinks it is personal. Has the corps done that many people wrong for that to be stated in the local paper (LH)? Does this mean the agency should be investigated for how it handles itself and the members? Why did it take 2 weeks to put this in the paper? Did the amount of damage take this agency of service? Was DOH notified of the incident? If this had been a patrol car would the person responsible already be in cuffs?

May 31, 2009 7:19 a.m. [Suggest removal] annarondac (no real name given) says... Important life support systems need to be up and running and ready for any emergency, that is critical to saving a life so a running vehicle is necessary. Police also do the same. An emergency contingent tries to be prepared for the worse. Turning off the vehicle is not even a consideration. It's a shame people are so inconsiderate of others that even in an emergency, someone sees a joy ride. Sad.



May 31, 2009 10:13 a.m. *xxeverafterx3* (no real name given) says...
[Suggest removal] Localyokel, you've obviously never been in an emergency situation where every second, literally, counts. If you've ever been in an ambulance you would know it takes more than 5 seconds to start the engine. It's a big vehicle you have to put the key in, wait at least 20 seconds for the light to come on to say it's safe to start. You then have to wait for the ambulance to idle down (about another minute or so) before you can drive. In this minute and a half stretch, someone could easily code, and their life in danger.
It's standard to leave any kind of emergency vehicle running in a situation so that care can be given as fast, and as easy as possible. For someone to even think of stealing an ambulance is sick and absurd. If it were that person's life in danger, I don't think they would've wanted someone stealing the ambulance that was supposed to transport them to a safe facility.
And finally, I do think that person (if and when found) should be charged with endangering a life, because ultimately, that is what they did.

May 31, 2009 10:16 a.m. *xxeverafterx3* (no real name given) says...
[Suggest removal] And to add on to my above comment, Localyokel, the furthest thing from your mind during an emergency situation is how much gas for the rig is costing you.

Try being in an emergency situation, you are worried about one thing and one thing only ... Your patient's safety. Because THATS YOUR JOB!

May 31, 2009 3:15 p.m. *localyokel* (no real name given) says...
[Suggest removal] Nice try but no cigar, annarondac and *xxeverafterx33*.

The battle cry "it saves lives" or "it saves jobs" is used to justify anything and everything these days. A lot of things, like a \$400 secure idle, are just toys for boys.

Let's look at two scenarios.

1)If every minute counts, personnel wouldn't be away from the truck long enough for anyone to steal it. Broadalbin isn't exactly New York City with thieves are lurking all around you. As for someone coding where "every single minute counts," I bet the kit to restart someone's heart is portable...and in the house with ambulance personnel. So what exactly requires that the ambulance needs to be all fired up and running non-stop?

2)If ambulance personnel just spent 20 minutes in someone's house and are far enough away that they can't see the truck, they aren't using any "critical systems" in the ambulance. So starting the ambulance isn't going to kill anyone.

So...unless ambulance service is contracted out to a private company and the ride is charged in its entirety to the injured person (in which case feel free to run up the charges), tax dollars are paying for emergency services. Money doesn't grow on trees, especially not these days. All the melodrama about saving lives in order to justify any expense is most likely self-serving puffery by those who refuse to exercise even a little common sense.

Have fun riding around in your rig, boys. Try not to turn the lights on when you go get your pizza!

May 31, 2009
4:18 p.m.

[Suggest removal]

xxeverafterx3 (no real name given) says...
Ok Localyokel, EMS personnel are meant to stabilize a patient on the way to the hospital. Any kind of emergency treatment in the field is not to suffice for advanced medical care at the hospital. If you look at the six-pointed star of life that EMS personnel live by, the last point is TRANSFER TO DEFINITIVE CARE. i.e. the hospital. Yes, the AED is portable, and yes they could've used it if needed, but at the same time, transport to the hospital needs to be immediate. Whether the person has a fractured ankle, or a massive heart attack, they need immediate care. That's why they called EMS in the first place. The rig stays up and running to not waste time getting the patient to an advanced practitioner.

A 400\$ expense is worth the over 5000\$ in damage done to the rig. It'll help protect the rig, while allowing us to save the time of turning it on.

My question to you is, have you ever ridden on an ambulance during an emergency situation? If so, you would know what it's like and you would understand better the need for leaving the rig running.

Saving lives is not melodrama, it's real life and until you're there you have no clue. I take offense to you calling it that and daying we don't use common sense.

As far as the pizza comment goes, nice try, ... but we operate under emergency circumstances and a true professional (as MOST of us are) would never do that.

May 31, 2009
5:03 p.m.

[Suggest removal]

localyokel (no real name given) says...
By your own figures, everafter, we're talking a mere minute and 20 seconds to start a vehicle...after you've already spent considerable time away from the vehicle stabilizing the patient.

Turn off the vehicle and put the key in your pocket when the vehicle will be unattended...like the rest of America. Common sense doesn't cost \$400.

Next you'll be wanting to replace the whole ambulance because it has a flat tire.

BTW, I HAVE been in an emergency vehicle. It took so long for the EMTs to get there when I was banged up, despite being in a city (Albany), that I wonder how ANYONE survives a heart attack or other serious emergency relying on existing EMT services. It doesn't surprise me at all that a kid recently died waiting for an ambulance to drop by. A \$400 idler won't solve real problems like this.

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/sto...>

May 31, 2009
10:15 p.m.

[Suggest removal]

medic_sean426 (no real name given) says...
To localyokel: spoken like someone who has never worked in the field. It is extremely essential we be able to leave our ambulances running, particularly on extremely hot or extremely cold days. The backs of the ambulance can get very hot (or cold) very fast, and this is a field in which improper temperature can contribute to the deterioration of a patient's health. Don't comment on things you don't understand.

As for the thieves, I hope when their caught they are charged with attempted manslaughter, as is permissible by law. They put the health of a fellow person (the patient) in jeopardy by stealing that ambulance. Charge them with grand theft auto, they won't think twice. Charge them with manslaughter, maybe they'll realize what they've done. Sure, this wasn't a life-threatening emergency - but they didn't know that. They better pray karma doesn't exist, or next time an ambulance is stolen, they could be the person needing a hospital. And localyokel, if you ever call on an ambulance, and it's hasn't been running the whole time, I hope you aren't in such a condition where the temperature will affect your health - and you'd better not b*tch about it being too hot or too cold.

May 31, 2009
10:20 p.m.

[Suggest removal]

medic_sean426 (no real name given) says...
BTW, yokel, I hope I get you on an emergency run someday, so you can see exactly what my job entails and why, as the other poster stated, every second does count. We are on scene for anywhere for less than a minute to half an hour, because we can't move a patient that isn't stable enough to transport until we have them stable (except in extreme cases such as CPR, which can be done in transit to the ambulance). Every statement you've made shows your complete lack of knowledge of my field of expertise and just makes you look like an ignoramus. It's because of people like you that EMS is such a thankless job, because we have to put up with idiots who don't know the first thing about EMS making snap judgments about us without having a clue as to what they're talking about.

May 31, 2009
10:38 p.m.

[Suggest removal]

medic_sean426 (no real name given) says...
Oh, one further thing (sorry, I just got to yokel's last comment), try getting the facts before jumping on the "EMS sucks in Albany" bandwagon, because the media is almost completely wrong on it. The ambulance did not take 25 minutes to reach the kid on the bike, it took 5 minutes, coming from Troy, as the nearest available unit. It was 15 minutes after the incident happened, but MAS didn't get the call from Albany fire until ten minutes later - by protocol set up by the politicians in Albany, 911 calls are answered by the fire dispatcher, who then calls Mohawk Ambulance, which is in a completely different building. Why was a Troy unit the closest ambulance? Because all the Albany ones (only 5 are allowed to operate at a time in Albany, again due to political contracts) were on calls. The closest *unavailable* unit was a short ways away from the accident, on a call for a HANGNAIL. Yes, some idiot decided a hangnail was ambulance-worthy, something that happens far too often. The crew asked the fire lieutenant on the hangnail scene if he would remain with the hangnail patient - who was clearly not an emergency - while they went to the MVA scene until another unit could arrive at one of the two scenes. The fire lieutenant would not allow them to leave, and insisted they transport the hangnail idiot to the hospital instead. Unfortunately, again because of protocols and laws, the crew was forced to comply, or be accused of abandoning their patient and losing their licenses. So, the Troy unit made record time getting there. All this aside, the child was dead. We call it obvious death - brain matter on the road dead. This was upon impact. There could've been an ambulance right beside the car that the boy hit, and it wouldn't have made a difference. It was a tragedy, yes. But it was entirely preventable by the child himself. Had he followed the law and worn a helmet, he'd be alive. Had he followed the law and not run a stop sign, he'd be alive. Try placing the blame where it belongs. You're so quick to judge, why don't you try our jobs. You wouldn't last half a day. I'm sorry you had to wait for an ambulance when you were "banged up." What, did you skin your knee? I guarantee there's more to the story that either you're not revealing or that you don't know. I've been an EMT for almost four years - in that time, my longest personal response time is ten minutes (coming from Schenectady and going all the way out to Ridge Road in West Glenville). The average response time within the city of Schenectady is about two minutes. The average in Albany is two and a half. The average in Troy is two. The average response time to an outlying area in our jurisdiction is about seven and a half minutes. If yours was longer, there's a reason. You may not know what it is, but that doesn't mean there isn't a legitimate one (and not stopping for pizza - we don't do that; most days we're lucky to get a lunch).

May 31, 2009 10:39 p.m. medic_sean426 (no real name given) says...
[Suggest removal] Okay last part (this is a continuation from my last post, wouldn't fit, but I think yokel needs to see why exactly he is uninformed): As for "wasting gas" - what do you care? You don't pay for it. Oh, and we use diesel, Mr. Omniscient One, not gasoline. And our company pays for it. Amazing how little you know about my job, but still feel compelled to tell me how it's being done wrong. Maybe you should try my job, let me know how that goes for you. I'd love to have you in my training group. Better yet, ever thought of seeking psychiatric help for this God complex you have, pretending to know all about things you have no knowledge of beyond being a disgruntled patient?

May 31, 2009 11:33 p.m. locallyokel (no real name given) says...
[Suggest removal] Get over yourself, Sean. If anybody has a god complex, it's you. If you're such a genius, go to med school and become a real doctor. Maybe then you won't feel so insecure that you can't stop telling us how hard your job is, how thankless your job is and how nobody understands your job. Boo hoo hoo. You sound like something off a TV show.

Or find a different job if you aren't up to dealing with the realities of your current job. Your life choices aren't my problem.

As for being an ignoramus, clearly you're one when it comes to basic economics. Diesel or regular gas, it costs \$\$\$\$. THAT's the point. Those and other costs are passed on to somebody -- patients, insurance companies or local governments. There's no such thing as a free lunch, sonny. Resources aren't unlimited. Your attitude is part of why our medical system is a mess.

Everything is a matter of balancing the gains versus the costs, Sean. Everything. Don't be so naive.

May 31, 2009 11:44 p.m. locallyokel (no real name given) says...
[Suggest removal] BTW, Sean, just like with the issue of diesel versus regular gas, you miss the point here, too: "The ambulance did not take 25 minutes to reach the kid on the bike, it took 5 minutes, coming from Troy, as the nearest available unit. It was 15 minutes after the incident happened, but MAS didn't get the call from Albany fire until ten minutes later..."

Nobody except you cares about the time it took A to call B to call C to call whoever before the ambulance got the call and arrived. Stop being willfully obtuse. The ONLY issue is long it took in TOTAL to get to the kid...which was way too long by any sane standard. Period.

June 1, 2009 3:43 p.m. medic_sean426 (no real name given) says...
local, you missed the entire point of EVERY point made. Big shock there. I never said

[Suggest removal] diesel is cheaper than gasoline, I was pointing out that you act like you know everything about the job when you clearly know nothing about it. Must be nice to make judgments about stuff you are completely ignorant about. Just like I never said 15 minutes isn't a long time to wait for an ambulance, but rather was stating that you are placing blame in the wrong place, again owing to your ignorance of the situation. I don't believe I am a genius, and never said I was - stop putting words into my mouth and focus on your own. I am quite content in my job, despite it being hard and thankless, and don't need your approval. Forgive us for trying to educate the ignorant people of the world. I find it interesting that you don't want to admit that every second counts, EXCEPT when it relates to how long it takes an ambulance to get to you. Do us a favor, don't call us anymore. Call a taxi, or better yet, drive yourself. What do you know about ambulance protocols? Oh, right: nothing. Try looking up the laws governing how fast we're allowing to go, even in an emergency, or the protocols for what constitutes which response level - not all emergencies qualify for lights and sirens. Unlike you, my main purpose was to try to educate you on why you were missing certain points, not to whine. I don't try to tell you how to do whatever your job is, assuming you have one, because I most likely don't know your protocols and procedures. Don't pretend to understand ours, because you clearly don't. So, to sum up: if you don't like us, don't call us. Just don't rattle off "facts" you know nothing about, and then get mad when you're shown to be wrong. Of course, you'll just come back with more blather that you don't understand to try to justify your paranoia, so I give up on you. Hate us, who cares? You're one less BS call we'll have to field, and we can focus on those with real emergencies.

June 1, 2009 medic_sean426 (no real name given) says...

5:12 p.m.

[Suggest removal]

BTW, local, I'm well aware my life choices aren't your problem. Fortunately, they aren't my problem, either - I'm quite happy with my choices. Sadly, your life choices directly affect my career in a couple ways. One way - and I don't know your exact injuries when you say "banged up," so maybe this doesn't apply to you - is that we have to field a lot of bullsh*t calls for hangnails, stomachaches, colds, stubbed toes, etc. The choice to call an ambulance should be reserved for true emergencies, and that affects me, my co-workers and every legitimate patient out there. And no, I'm not "whining" about my job - I know that dealing with the BS is part of the job, and I take that responsibility on willingly - but it does harm others, so please don't believe your choices don't affect others. The second way you're causing problems is, in legal terms, called libel or slander. You're making accusations based on false and omitted data. You see the news, assume everything is correct without doing any research yourself, and spout

it off as gospel truth. How would you like it if I came to your job, completely unawares of what said job involves, and started telling all your customers that you're incompetent and unable to do your job based solely on my observations of what could very well be an anomaly in your routine? As to your naive comment about "real doctors," I never claimed to be a doctor. I'm an EMT, and proud of it. I don't need to be a doctor to help people. I'm not knocking doctors - they're important too - but I get to help people immediately after their injury, illness or whatever is ailing them, in the field; I get to stabilize them, I get to get them to that hospital. That's not a complaint - that's pride. I'm proud of what we do, and yes, it sucks sometimes to have to deal with BS, but the saves I've made more than make up for it. It's a shame that you that you have so little respect for the field of EMS, because you clearly understand nothing about it. If you'd like to ask more about the field so that you can better understand, please do - I don't mind people asking things they don't know, it's the smart thing to do. Here's a couple questions for you, though about your "long wait" for an ambulance: What was the exact nature of your injury? Where was the ambulance coming from? Other than the wait, was there anything else negative about the call, or did they treat you with respect, stabilize your injury, and get you to the hospital? And here's one about the call you seem to enjoy referring to when saying that the ambulances screwed up: Exactly what outside info do you have as to what happened on that call, other than the media, whom I've already showed has a very skewed agenda? Any direct sources, or are you operating solely on hearsay and conjecture?

June 1, 2009 5:21 p.m. xxeverafterx3 (no real name given) says...

[Suggest removal]

I'm tired of getting into this whole debate, I don't feel I have to defend what we as EMS personnel do. Thank you medic for adding more insight of what we do in emergency situations. As for you yokel, I hope you have an emergency someday, and someone steals the ambulance that you are supposed to be riding in. Maybe it'll give you an appreciation for what we as EMS workers have to deal with.

Be looking out for my opinion letter on what disrespect EMS workers get.

June 2, 2009 10:05 a.m. localyokel (no real name given) says...

[Suggest removal]

Sean -- Seek mental health help. You've got anger problems and can't deal with criticism at all.

Everafter -- Go for it. I look forward to your letter. That's what free speech is all about.

June 3, 2009 3:46 p.m. kylejb2663 (no real name given) says... localyokel,

[Suggest removal] I think some people here have forgotten what you said.. which was "You were in an ambulance", and from what it sounds like from your upper post you did not have a good experience with them because it took so long.

I am not trying to gang up on you, however are you using these comments your making to get some type of revenge on EMS workers because your ambulance ride was not perfect?

I also am a EMT who does NOT get paid, I Volunteer. I do it because I appreciate helping people and families to keep their loved ones whether an accident happened or an illness.

I find it appealing that you have so many comments on the "idle" function of an ambulance when you do not work with ambulances or drive one. This is like saying you hate a feature in my Mercedes Benz but you have never used it or tried it but because you own a Chevy you don't think it would work well.

Point blank, they would not have designed a idle feature on an ambulance that actually has a switch for looks... it's because of the amperage draw on the batteries and engine voltage system. Ambulances have glow plugs, which take a while for a spark to ignite which means they do not start as quick as a car or even diesel truck. You put a lot of stress on a ambulance when you start it up and shut it off instead of keeping it running. Much more then a gas bill would ever be for a repair on the AC/DC Voltage Regulators and the Systems in an ambulance which are at most times state of the art.

What I am saying, is please do not think you know what your talking about it if you do not have the experience and the "know how". You don't tell me how to do my job, I don't tell you how to do yours- Granted I am only 21 years old but I live by the old saying of my grand parents.

June 23, 2009
6:55 p.m.

RCBtheEMT (no real name given) says...
Only those who don't work an ambulance service would think to tell those who do, how to do the job.

[Suggest removal]

Ambulances are kept running as to keep the heat or A/C going. It keeps the batteries charged, as the radio system and emergency lighting is kept on, in some jurisdictions, even when the ambulance is safely parked out of traffic lanes while operating at the scene of a call.
My vollie squad (Peninsula Volunteer Ambulance Corps, Queens County, NY, 1973-1996) had a Cadillac ambulance stolen in 1974, and I know an FDNY EMS ambulance from my station was stolen in 1988, both while on assignments. Unlike the Broadalbin case, these vehicles were both recovered with no ill effects on the patients to whom they had responded, or damage. In this day and age, terrorists possibly might steal an ambulance, either off the streets, or

from the station/garage/base/depot, and use it as a "Weapons of Mass Destruction" delivery system. After all, who, usually, is going to stop an obvious emergency vehicle, traveling at lights and siren/emergency status? \$400.00 for a "no keys-running" security system? I think that is less than what the FDNY EMS spends for each of our line of such systems, per vehicle, in our current fleet. Is there a P. O. box for fundraising towards a replacement vehicle for the Broadalbin VAC, with or without the no keys-running system built in?

Richard Berger,
Emergency Medical Technician.

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