



The Ultimate Guide to Buying Vehicles for Private Security

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Vehicle fleets are an essential part of many physical security companies. But what many security company owners don't realize is that successfully managing vehicles in their fleet depends on a large number of things going right.

If the following factors aren't carefully considered, a vehicle fleet can easily become ineffective and unprofitable. This article will look at 3 different areas security company owners should consider before buying vehicles. Plus, see which 2 vehicles are best overall for private security use.

- 1 What is Total Cost of Ownership?
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If you want more information on effective fleet management, check out this webinar with Corey McGuinness from [Driven Fleet Concepts](#) on the [fundamentals for success in private security fleet management](#).

What is Total Cost of Ownership?

Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) might sound intimidating. But in the simplest terms, it tells you exactly how much a vehicle will cost your security company over its entire lifetime. Here is the basic TCO equation:

$$\text{Total Cost of Ownership} = \text{Fixed Cost} + \text{Total Operating Cost}$$

To actually calculate TCO, you need to look a little deeper. To understand the true cost of a vehicle based on vehicle usage, fleet management experts typically look at a vehicle's "cost-per-mile."

But in the physical security industry, a better unit to use is "cost-per-day" because of how vehicles are typically used in a security company. To find that number, use this equation:

$$\text{Cost-per-day} = (\text{Depreciation} + \text{Fuel} + \text{Maintenance} + \text{Interest} + \text{Taxes/Fees}) \div \text{Operating Hours per Day}$$

This equation will give you a detailed breakdown of how much it costs to operate one of your mobile patrol units - or other vehicles - each day. Each one of these costs are highly dependent on the vehicle class you get and/or your financing plan.

Another way to calculate a mobile patrol unit's cost is in "cost-per-hit." You can download that calculator in the link below.



Download and Read More

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

Optimizing the TCO for each vehicle in your private security company is one of the best ways to effectively manage a fleet and keep costs low. For more information on TCO, check out [this fleet management webinar](#).

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The Pros and Cons of Vehicle Classes

Once you know the basics of TCO, it's time to consider the vehicle class that will work best for your security operation. Many of the factors that determine TCO - including fuel, maintenance and depreciation - contribute to the best and worst vehicle classes for private security vehicle fleets.

This section will look at the most popular vehicle classes on the market - and the pros and cons for each one as it relates to the private security industry.

Sedans



Pros

- Low initial acquisition cost compared to other classes
- Best class for fuel efficiency
- Easy to maneuver in high-metro areas

Cons

- Very high depreciation compared to other classes
- Small profile/site presence means less deterrence
- Not ideal for rough terrain/unfinished roads

Bottom line: Sedans are ideal for simple property types (apartment complexes, HOAs, etc.) and/or contracts where the client has no specific vehicle requirements. They are appealing for their low initial price point, but high depreciation can make that quickly irrelevant.

SUVs/CUVs



Pros

- Best class for low TCO
- High resale value - especially compared to sedans
- Larger profile/site presence

- All-wheel-drive packages available for harsher weather conditions
- Ample storage for equipment (i.e. traffic cones)
- Vertical gates in back can help with weather protection, make loading/unloading equipment easier

Cons

- Lower fuel efficiency than other classes
- Higher initial cost

Bottom line: SUVs/CUVs are considered to be the best class for vehicle fleets by a long shot. It's the most prominent vehicle class in the US, which means vehicles are readily available and have a high resale value. They are the most balanced vehicle class across TCO factors.

Trucks



Pros

- Highest resale value of any class
- Ample storage space
- Easily customizable/upgradable with aftermarket packages
- Best class for rougher road conditions/terrain

Cons

- Most expensive class for initial cost
- Worst class for fuel efficiency
- High maintenance costs
- Poor maneuverability in some areas
- Large blind spots decrease safety

Bottom line: If you are based in a rural area, somewhere with very poor weather conditions, and/or cover many unfinished sites like construction zones, trucks are ideal. But for the average security company, higher costs across the board can and should be avoided in this class.

Cargo/Sprinter Vans



Pros

- Maximized cargo space
- Newer models are more fuel efficient than previous generations

Cons

- Typically the primary benefits of the class are underutilized

- Dealers equip more options than necessary for most fleets resulting in unnecessary higher costs
- Standard safety options are not as advanced as other classes

Bottom line: If you require a lot of equipment storage for your security vehicles and don't mind a higher cost, vans are a decent solution. For most security companies, there are not enough positive features to make vans a serious option.

Golf Carts



Pros

- Best class for maneuverability
- Low maintenance costs
- Easy to operate for most people

Cons

- Spare units are less common and could result in higher downtime when maintenance is required
- Less options for maintenance providers
- TCO is hard to measure

Bottom line: Golf carts have a very specific advantage if you have contracts on campuses or similar properties with limited road access. But because they are so specific, limited access to maintenance could be very detrimental.

Services, Contracts & Other Variables

Considering what vehicle classes are best for TCO and other factors is important. Equally important is understanding how specific security service, contracts, clients, and other variables can affect what vehicle you'll need to buy.

When thinking about vehicles as they relate to your security contracts, there's a basic rule of thumb to follow: **let the contracts you are trying to win dictate the vehicles you need.** Most contracts will have specific vehicle class requirements.

You can research the industry or property types that you're targeting to see what kind of vehicles are typically used. This will give you an idea of what type of vehicles you might need to buy. Just know that the only foolproof method here is to let the specific contract dictate your purchases.

When it comes to specific security services, a lot can change. Your vehicle needs for a mobile patrol in an HOA or shopping center will likely be very different than your needs for running executive protection. And again, clients will likely have requirements about the vehicles you use on their contract.

Here are a few more things to consider when you're looking to buy vehicles for your security company:

- Climate and weather
- On-site road conditions
- Aftermarket equipment

What security services you offer and what contracts you are trying to win can have a big impact on the types of vehicles you should buy. Keeping all variables in mind will set you up to make the best decision in regards to buying vehicles.

The 2 Best Vehicles for Private Security Companies

With all of the different factors for buying security vehicles in mind, 2 vehicles stand out as the best options for private security companies. Both of these vehicles have a relatively low TCO, have features that benefit security services, and are in the best vehicle class.



Ford EcoSport

- MSRP: Starting at \$19,995
- Fuel efficiency: 27 city/29 highway MPG
- Storage: 50 cubic feet
- AWD capable
- Swing back door
- Upgradable suspension package
- Fast-charging USB and 2 12-volt power outlets



Chevy Trax

- MSRP: Starting at \$21,400
- Fuel Efficiency: 26 city/31 highway MPG
- Storage: 48.4 cubic feet
- Other features
- AWD capable
- Front passenger seat folds down flat
- Factory skid plate option

Closing

There is a long list of factors for private security companies to consider when trying to manage a cost-efficient vehicle fleet. By paying close attention to TCO and the specific needs of your company, you can optimize your vehicle fleet to keep your clients happy and your costs low.

For more fleet management help, make sure you register for the next Thinkcurity webinar with Korey McGuinness where he will discuss **best practices for running a large-scale security vehicle fleet!**