



# 3 Ways Fire Departments Can Enhance Their Alerting System on a Budget

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## PURVIS SYSTEMS

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*Technology Solutions with Peace of Mind*

### Overwhelmed by alerting system costs?

The advanced technology offered by a modern fire station alerting solution provides agencies with a variety of benefits - from improved communications and reduced response times to better overall mental health and well-being for first responders. But, this technology often carries a price tag that may feel cost-prohibitive in the face of budget constraints and economic uncertainty. Add to that the rapid rate at which technology changes, and it's easy to understand how investing in fire station alerting technology may feel overwhelming.

But what if fire station alerting improvements don't need to be an all-or-nothing proposition? A tight budget shouldn't keep you from making incremental changes toward a fully modernized fire station alerting system with the potential for unsurpassed longevity. Here are three considerations that can help you work your way to the fire station alerting solution that meets your agency's immediate - and future - needs.

### 1. Start with the core components

You can probably imagine the fully loaded fire station alerting solution you want: one that automates the alerting process with human-like text to speech announcements, displays dispatch information on monitors and printed tickets, opens doors, shuts off stoves, and offers advanced zoning functionality. It has ramped audio and lighting, easy-to-understand automated voice, and tracks your turnout time and other metrics. It does it all - with a price tag to match.

Don't wait until you can afford the full solution you want to start implementing the improvements you need now. Here are three entry-level station alerting solutions you can consider:

- **Install a Message Board solution**

Some Message Boards can interface directly with an agency's CAD system to act as a station's standalone alerting solution and automatically display incident alerts and other relevant information. They provide a high level of situational awareness for station personnel, and in some cases, can cut down on response times because alerts display at a station before the dispatcher begins announcing. A message board solution is also versatile enough for you to add additional FSAS alerting capabilities down the road.

- **Use your radio system to trigger alerting in a station via relays**

In a small, regional fire department in Kentucky, the station has a Station Control Unit (SCU) so that when the dispatcher announces over the radio, the radio activates relays that turn on LED lights and

open station speakers so the dispatch audio can be heard throughout the station. This is an affordable solution for the department because the alerting system does not require an interface with the agency's dispatch center or CAD system to activate the station. In the future, this agency can easily expand its system with a FSAS Central Server and a CAD interface to automate the dispatch voice alerting process and connect a variety of station devices to the station's SCU.

### ■ **Connect your radio with your CAD system at dispatch**

There are multiple ways to connect with CAD to meet your needs and budget requirements. Another common starting point for a base system is an automated voice dispatch solution connected to your CAD system at the dispatch center. This solution provides voice and tone alerting for all your stations over the radio network and the ability to alert over SMS, mobile app, and email. From there, you can add station equipment in one, multiple, or all stations over time, enabling IP alerting to the stations and creating redundancy with ongoing radio alerts. Agencies that require a robust solution can leverage sophisticated interfaces with two-way data exchange capabilities, while more simplistic approaches to a CAD interface allow the system to just receive the relevant call information when a call for service is dispatched.

## 2. Make use of commercially available, off-the-shelf components

The best station alerting solutions make use of standards-based, commercially available off-the-shelf (COTS) hardware and equipment. Avoiding proprietary components helps you avoid vendor lock-in and greatly expands your pool of possible technology options. Furthermore, a standards-based FSAS solution can often be integrated with legacy devices that are also standards-based to help reduce your up front costs and allow you to phase in new technologies over time.

In a mission-critical system, having access to a variety of technology options from multiple sources is essential to keeping a solution up and running. In fact, PURVIS has replaced other systems that relied on proprietary hardware for customers who were challenged to find replacement hardware in order to keep the system operating properly.

## 3. Embrace incremental expansion and leverage existing technology

A modular solution allows for easy expansion and customization as needs, budgets, and desires change over time. The idea of "customization" may suggest a higher price tag, but in reality, customization ensures you are buying only what you truly need. As mentioned above, start with a core solution, then select features and functionality needed station-by-station. Maybe only one station needs zoning, or the speakers and lights in a newer station can be reused.



Part of your core solution may include integrating with existing technology to keep costs down. For example, a large city fire department in California did not have the budget to upgrade all the legacy equipment across all its stations. So, PURVIS made use of custom cable connections to connect with their existing devices. Now, the city has a modernized and reliable system and can make equipment upgrades as needed over time.

### Choose a partner who can grow with you

In addition to the above, the partner you choose for this work is a critical piece of the station alerting solution puzzle. Whatever your situation, be sure to find a robust FSAS partner that has the ability and flexibility to expand your system; you don't want to be pigeonholed into staying with a basic solution when you're ready for an upgrade! Seek a partner with proven experience supporting and building basic solutions into more complex systems.

An ongoing partnership is the best way to ensure system longevity. A trusted partner is committed to ensuring your systems operate seamlessly 24/7/365 so you can focus on your #1 priority: protecting the lives and property within the communities you serve.



### About PURVIS Systems

PURVIS has been installing and maintaining mission-critical systems for fire departments and other public safety organizations for almost 50 years.

We understand the critical role technology plays in response times, and we make it our mission to implement solutions that empower our clients to handle emergency situations quickly and safely.

Additionally, we know that your ability to serve your community is dependent on your team, and you need your team to perform at their best. Consideration of their physical and mental well-being should extend beyond the gym and into the actual workplace. As your trusted partner, we tailor technology solutions to your organization to provide a solution that meets the requirements of your community and the needs of your personnel. We work to solve your challenges so you can focus on protecting life, safety, and property.

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**PURVIS Systems has long-term engineering and technical services contracts with clients such as:**

- New York City Fire Department (FDNY)
- Charleston County, SC
- Boston Fire Department
- Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD)
- District of Columbia
- Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire

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“PURVIS' dynamic station message boards, which allow us to post custom content and display real-time call information, combined with their ability to connect with our CAD system through a simple yet effective interface, are smart, budget-friendly solutions that have had a significant impact on our response times, situational awareness, and personnel well-being. PURVIS **understands our needs and goals and offers the system flexibility to make incremental yet impactful enhancements to our system.**”

*- Michael A DeMello, Chief of Department, Bristol Fire Department*

**If you have questions about what to look for in a fire station alerting solution or partner, let's connect.**

Our team of public safety industry veterans is ready and willing to help answer any questions and steer you in the right direction.

**For more information, please visit [PURVIS.com/station-alerting](https://www.purvis.com/station-alerting)**