

Deer Springs Fire District: Reducing the Toll of Emergency Dispatch

Modern Fire Station Alerting System Improves
Response Time While Protecting Firefighter
Health and Well Being



Deer Springs Fire Protection District modernized its fire station alerting systems to reduce unnecessary wakeups, improve alert clarity, and shorten turnout delays. The result is a calmer, more consistent alerting experience that supports both firefighter wellness and operational readiness.

Learn how RMI FSA delivers consistent messaging, selective room-based alerts, and faster turnout, helping Deer Spring FPD crews respond quickly and safely while protecting their long-term health.

THE NEED

Legacy alerting systems created unnecessary stress and disrupted sleep.

Designed for speed rather than wellness, older systems relied on loud tones, harsh lighting, and station wide wakeups. Although many of these systems continue to perform reliably for decades, they have also disrupted sleep cycles, elevated stress hormones, and contributed to long term fatigue.

"Historically, fire station alerting systems in the past were very loud. The whole idea was to get everyone's attention and after decades of that, it takes a toll. There are other ways to get attention without just being loud."

– Thomas Shoots, Battalion Chief, Deer Springs FPD

Battalion Chief Thomas Shoots of the Deer Springs Fire Protection District has witnessed that reality firsthand. "There is so much that our firefighters already have to absorb ... the physical and mental strain. We don't need to add anything onto their plate."

As District Chief, Shoots is responsible for the day to day fire and EMS operation in Deer Springs, including station readiness, response capability,

and coordination with CAL FIRE.

"Historically, fire station alerting systems in the past were very loud," says Shoots. "The whole idea was to get everyone's attention and after decades of that, it takes a toll. There are other ways to get attention without just being loud."

Station 2—a busy rescue station with an urban search and rescue vehicle and a swiftwater rescue team—was exactly the kind of station where legacy, one size fits all alerting caused unnecessary disruption. Its crews rotate through different rooms depending on staffing and overtime assignments. The calls can vary widely, and the operational tempo is unpredictable.

When Deer Springs rebuilt Station 2 from the foundation up, fire leadership saw a chance to rethink how firefighters are alerted — not just how fast.



CALIFORNIA
USA

LOCATION



EXPERTISE

PUBLIC
SAFETY

- 47 sq. mile service area - Mix of residential, visitor, and wildland-urban interface
- 13,000 residents
- 3 fire stations
- 3 Advanced Life Support fire engines
- 26 personnel
- 1400+ emergencies responses per year

THE SOLUTION

RMI's Fire Station Alerting System modernizes alerting with clarity, consistency, and selective notifications.

Several years earlier, the district had upgraded its other stations to a modern fire station alerting system from RadioMobile (RMI), a San Diego based company that provides life saving technology solutions for the fire service. Shoots had seen it in action at partner agency San Diego County Fire. "We knew the system had been vetted and that it worked well," he says.



RMI's Fire Station Alerting System (RMI FSA) is designed to help agencies move beyond legacy alerting by converting CAD dispatch data into immediate station actions such as tones, lighting changes, message displays, and dispatch voice.

"The alerting system is really meant to make responding to calls as efficient and effective as possible," adds Shoots. "Ultimately our goal is to get out the door as quickly and safely as possible and get to where people need us."

RMI FSA is activated automatically upon receipt of a dispatch message. When a 911 call is processed and dispatched, the information is sent to the station over an IP network or, in some cases, over radio. In an IP based system, the message is forwarded to the command desk terminal, which extracts the information needed to alert the right personnel, activate the appropriate station devices, and send the information to firefighters.

Automated messaging ensures both higher consistency of messages and accuracy because the digital message can be converted into text to speech, which results in all stations hearing the same voice, cadence, and delivery on each call. This reduces variability from live dispatcher audio such as fatigue, accent, time of shift, and clarity of speech.

"In the past, we had a dispatcher reading out call information and every dispatcher is going to be different. The signal wasn't always the best and it wasn't always clear," explains Shoots. "Now, when the digital voice comes over, you know exactly what it is going to sound like. It is very clear, easy to understand, and there is no interference."

Selective Alerting Reduces Unnecessary Wakeups

Another key capability is selective, or zone based, alerting. Instead of waking the entire station for every call, the system can alert the rooms and crew areas tied to the units assigned to the incident. That flexibility allows a one engine station, for example, to be handled very differently from a larger station with multiple companies, specialty units, rotating rooms, or overtime crew assignments.

RMI FSA includes features designed to reduce unnecessary stress for firefighters, particularly when they are at rest or sleeping. Rather than suddenly shocking the entire station awake, selective alerting allows only the rooms tied to the assigned unit to receive tones.



Zone selector panels let crews identify which unit is assigned to a room for that shift. Tones ramp up gradually instead of blasting awake a sleeping station. Visual indicators such as red for engines, yellow for trucks, blue for medics, green for brush rigs, provide instant clarity.

For a recent wildland fire, Shoots recalls hearing the tones begin, then looking up immediately to see a white light indicating that as Battalion Chief he was expected to respond before the audio message was even delivered. He was instantly on the move.

Because the alerts are consistent, he says, “your mind knows exactly what’s happening when you have a call, but it’s not to the point where it gets your heart racing.”

THE OUTCOME

Faster turnout, calmer wakeups, and improved firefighter wellness.

Turnout speed is another benefit. Older radio based station alerting methods can take a minute or more to deliver an alert into the station. RMI’s network based approach can reduce that delay to less than a second. When emergency response is measured in seconds, eliminating a minute of delay can materially improve turnout time.

“Getting us out the door and over to help people is really important,” says Shoots. “We are a little less urban in our area as well, which means it does

take longer to get to some of these locations. What we don’t want is any kind of added delay getting out the door.”

Turnout timers installed in apparatus bays help crews track their performance in real time. Dispatch information delivered simultaneously to the station and responding vehicles improve continuity and accountability.

But the broader story is not about Deer Springs. It is about a shift in mindset across the fire service. Harsh lighting, blaring speakers, and abrupt tones may have met the needs of an earlier era, but they also introduce unnecessary disruptions in today’s stations. Modern alerting is not about bells and whistles. It is about protecting firefighters’ sleep, reducing unnecessary stress, and acknowledging the emotional weight of everyday trauma by proxy.

“We want our people to be able to have a nice long career and be able to make it to retirement.

Anything we can do to help on that front is huge.”

– Thomas Shoots, Battalion Chief, Deer Springs FPD

ABOUT RMI

RMI provides technology solutions for fire and EMS agencies, specializing in fire station alerting, apparatus tracking, and operational connectivity. RMI’s solutions connect dispatch centers, fire stations, and field personnel to support faster, more coordinated emergency response.

Built around speed, reliability, and interoperability, RMI’s technology is designed to work with agencies’ existing systems and infrastructure while supporting evolving operational needs.

Through software-driven capabilities, system integration, and ongoing support, RMI helps fire and EMS agencies maintain operational readiness, improve visibility across their operations, and access the information they need when seconds matter most.

Explore fire station alerting for your department. Talk with our team: 858-444-1330 | radiomobile.com



www.radiomobile.com

8801 Kenamar Drive, San Diego, CA 92121

858-444-1330