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Fire & EMS Software

2020 Buyers Guide



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What should a high-quality reporting & records management system (RMS) provide?

Your Fire & EMS software should make it easy for you to accurately submit your data for state and federal reporting requirements, and should be NFIRS and NEMSIS 3-compliant. A high-quality RMS offers a fully-integrated ePCR so that you only need to submit one report instead of two, saving time.

A good system should also include tools that enable you to efficiently manage all of your agency's needs, from internal tracking for payroll and certifications to recording community data such as occupancy and hydrant maintenance records. Real time validation will let you know if your report is on track to be accepted as you go through the required fields.

High quality RMS providers also focus on providing excellent support and training for their customers. Switching from your current system to your new provider should be a simple process. In order to keep your data safe from cyber criminals, it's important to use an RMS that is hosted in a secure, cloud-based environment. Keeping your data in the cloud and not on physical servers is imperative to reducing your vulnerability to data breaches.

Many programs are available for reporting your data to state and federal authorities, however, most quality RMS systems also include a diverse collection of powerful station management tools, as well as API capability that allows for seamless integration with other tools you already use. Some useful tools to look for include:

- Inventory and maintenance records
- The ability to record occupancy and hydrant data
- A library for storing important digital documents
- Data storage with advanced filtering and internal reporting
- Payroll and/or points tracking
- Internal messaging capabilities
- Daily rosters





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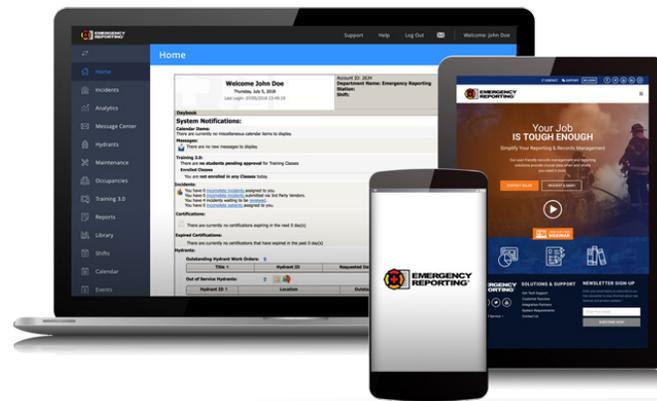
Hardware & network requirements.



In order for software to function properly, your agency will need to make sure it has the correct infrastructure in place. Some software is locally installed, often on a single computer. If considering a boxed software option like this, it is important for your agency to check that its computers have the operating system and storage space required for installation.

Another popular option is to use a software provider offering “software as a service” or SaaS. With this option, the vendor manages the software, data storage, and any system updates, and the customer accesses the system through a web connection. This is often a much more reliable and cost-effective solution for agencies who lack the time and/or IT personnel to manage a secure in-house system.

Most importantly, SaaS vendors use the cloud for data backup and security. They provide physically isolated data centers and protected networks. These are separate from general networks and are maintained to prevent unwanted communications and block unauthorized users, making them inherently safer.



API Integration Options.



CAD Link Integrations

To make your experience with your Fire and EMS records management system seamless, it's recommended that your software be able to integrate with your Dispatch Center's CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) System. This feature helps reduce inconsistencies in incident data such as incorrect location information, differing apparatus times, and spelling errors. Your RMS CAD integration should automatically upload information from your dispatcher into your system in real time or at the end of a call. Having this tool has been shown to drastically improve department's data integrity, staff productivity, and time per call.

API Integrations

Many Fire and EMS agencies are now using multiple software solutions in addition to their records management system. For this reason, it is imperative that your RMS have the ability to seamlessly integrate with other software in order to reduce your staff's time spent entering data. Using various software products with your primary RMS can help your department improve efficiency, response time, operations, and asset management. Types of tools that your RMS might partner with are apparatus check programs, CAD link apps, enroute solutions, inspection software, pre-planning or scheduling software.



Have you considered a county-wide solution?

Working with other departments in your county can pay off when you get everyone using the same software.

A county-wide solution allows departments to share the cost of a CAD link and depending on the RMS software you choose, it can even provide you with the capability to create joint incident reports for mutual aid given and received, share inspection forms, and create joint reports.



What are the advantages of a high-quality reporting & RMS?



1 Decreased Time Spent on Paperwork & Maximum Efficiency

A good reporting and records management system will save you time. Manual processes are eliminated, allowing your team to focus on the job and not on paperwork. It's important that it's just as easy to get your data out of your software, as it was to put it in.

- Keep all electronic records in one cohesive system.
- Store digital files, including videos and photos, inside each record.
- Ensure all reports are complete and compliant with federal requirements.

2 Improved Accountability

The best reporting and records management systems track user interactions with electronic records and help to eliminate human error.

- Electronic records track user interaction with incident reports and more
- Reports for analysis of station performance are easy to run.
- Web-based systems allow access from anywhere, anytime.
Look for systems that allow unlimited concurrent users.





What are the advantages of a high-quality reporting & RMS? (Continued)



3 Efficient Data Analysis

Many records management systems allow you to run reports on your data to identify areas of operational strength and weakness within your agency.

- Run reports on personnel—hours worked, training, certification, etc.
- Keep track of response times and other standards of cover.
- Defend your budget—track the value of your saves for your community.

4 Consistency & Security

Keep all your data in one comprehensive system.

- Store common forms and templates.
- Use system best practices to ensure data integrity.
- Set up notifications pertinent to your agency.
- Control user permissions and data access with administrative features.
- Save time and resources by choosing an RMS that makes switching from your current system easy and painless, preserving all of your past data.
- Have control over user access and permissions.
- Hosted in a secure environment, such as Microsoft Azure.
- Follow high level security best practices to protect sensitive patient, personnel, and department data.



Steps to successfully implement a fire reporting & records management software.

1 Make a Plan

- Identify key decision makers and interview them to understand their specific needs out of a Fire and EMS software.
- Plan a timeline for implementation.
- Assemble a team to help with the selection.

2 Consider Your Resources

- What hardware requirements do you have?
- Outline the available budget.
- Do you have the staff needed to implement the software?
- What long-term resources may need to be committed?

3 Evaluate & Try

- Gauge the ease of use of varying products.
- Request demos from several of your top choices to compare.
- Use a comparison checklist to help you compare RMS companies.
- Discuss if and how your existing records can be imported.
- Take a look at customer reviews and ask other departments for references.
- Look at how the RMS integrates with other tools your department uses, including your CAD system.
- Consider your contract terms with various vendors.

4 Select & Implement

- Set up your account and import data, if available.
- Get field experts to train your team on how to use the system.
- Establish organizational best practices.
- Analyze your goals and assess the results.



About Emergency Reporting

Emergency Reporting (ER) specializes in cloud-based records management software solutions for more than 480,451 authorized users, nearly 6,718 civilian Fire/Rescue and EMS agencies of all sizes, and 175 DoD/military installations worldwide, as well as large entities with self-contained Fire & EMS services like NASA, nuclear power plants, hospitals and oil refineries. ER is known as the most trusted, secure, easiest-to-use, largest Fire RMS in the U.S.

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