



*“Fifteen Tips for
Planning a
Fire-Rescue Facility”*



Stewart · Cooper · Newell
Architects

“Fifteen Tips for Planning a Fire-Rescue Facility”

Written by: **Ken Newell, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**

Stewart-Cooper-Newell Architects

After a design firm spends forty-plus years designing Fire-Rescue facilities, they often are asked by public safety personnel beginning the facility planning process, “What are some of the tips you can give us for our station project?” This is not a Top Fifteen List, but is simply a random list of ideas we find ourselves repeating to our clients and those in the pre-planning stage.

1. A full site survey, including topography and many other data characteristics, will be necessary for design and construction. With the proper “survey checklist” there is nothing to keep you from having the survey performed even before you hire a design Professional.
2. Before selecting your Architect, be sure to speak with several of their past *public safety* clients to gauge their level of satisfaction with the Architect’s performance.
3. There are many non-construction costs associated with a project. These are typically referred to as “soft-costs” and can include items such as; land acquisition, surveys, special inspections, furnishings, equipment, design fees, etc.



Dayroom furnishings and Exercise Room equipment are examples of “soft-costs” or items normally not included in the construction costs.”

4. “Free property” is often turns out to be very expensive based on its development cost, unusable easements and right-of-ways, or what is below the ground surface, i.e., unsuitable soils, rock, high ground water, buried debris, etc.
5. You may be able to secure additional capital funding sources if you provide minimal space for other agencies like EMS, a police substation, or parks & recreation space.



Providing space for other agencies, such as the separated-entry police substation above, may secure additional funding sources.

6. Collect literature or cut-sheets on the equipment you plan to purchase for the new facilities, such as extractors, compressors, alerting systems. This information will be needed during the facility design.

(insert Photo Item 6 with description saying, “Collect and provide specs to the designer for all specialty equipment that the Department will provide.”)

7. Try to include “end-users” on your planning committee. They have a vested interest in being dedicated to the project’s success. If they are not included, they will certainly find items in the finished facility that don’t meet their expectations.

(insert Photo Item 7 with description saying, “End-users should be part of the planning committee and design process.”)

8. It is almost always less expensive to build a one-story station compared to a two-story station, assuming that you have the proper site to do so.

(insert Photo Items 8a and 8b- with description saying, “There is normally a significant price increase to build a multi-story station compared to single-story.”)

9. Plan the site and facility for future growth and modifications. It will happen.

(insert Photo Item 9 with description saying, “Station 2 was designed with a by-pass truck lane that can later become the third apparatus bay.”)

10. You can incorporate indoor and outdoor training props into the design for relatively little cost.

(insert Photo Item 10 with description saying, “This station mezzanine photo shows examples of inexpensive training props added such as; confined space roof hatch, training door and window openings, rappelling anchors and a raised platform on the opposite wall for basket training.”)

11. Select durable, maintenance-free materials and systems for inside and outside.
12. If you chose to use glass on the apparatus bay doors, consider not using it at the bottom panel. The glass at the bottom of the door is what requires cleaning most often.

(insert Photo Item 12 with description saying, “Materials selections that do not require painting and constant cleaning will reduce operating costs and increase the station lifespan.”)

13. There are many systems that applies color to the apparatus bay floors during construction, but very few of them provide a meaningful UV color fastness warranty *in writing*.
14. Prior to pouring the apparatus bay floors, have the building contractor pour a sample floor panel so that you can approve the floor finish you expect to receive with the final product.
15. Your Department may be eligible for grants or low-interest loans from government agencies such as FEMA, FHA, or USDA.



"Cherryville Fire Department Headquarters utilized USDA-backed funding."

For more information on these ideas or many others, contact us or any experienced public safety design professional.