



FIRE TRUCK PROCUREMENT GUIDE



OVERVIEW

If you're in the early planning stages of procuring a new fire apparatus or are new to a fire truck planning committee, this guide is designed to assist you.

The 'Fire Truck Procurement Guide' will walk your committee through every step of the process, ensuring you are well-prepared to make informed decisions to positively impact your department's operations for years to come.

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THE ROLE OF THE FIRE TRUCK PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE

The Fire Truck Procurement Committee's primary task is to ensure the fire department purchases the right apparatus to meet its operational needs. Typically composed of key stakeholders from various department areas, each committee member brings a unique perspective to the decision-making process.



OVERVIEW OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The procurement committee's primary responsibility is to oversee the entire procurement process, ensuring every aspect aligns with the department's requirements and strategic objectives. The committee must evaluate potential apparatus options, work closely with their fire truck manufacturer and ultimately design an apparatus to meet the community's operational demands and safety standards.

DETERMINE THE BUDGET

The procurement committee will also be tasked with setting a clear and realistic budget. This involves examining the department's financial situation, considering different funding options and balancing the cost with the truck's features and functionality. The budget is crucial to ensure a high-quality vehicle is purchased without overspending.

UNDERSTAND THE GOAL AND EXPECTED OUTCOME

The committee must also clearly understand the goals and expectations for the new fire truck. This includes defining the specific operational needs which the apparatus must meet. This should include:

- The types of emergencies it will respond to
- The environment it will operate in
- The number of personnel it will carry

Aligning the procurement process with these goals will ensure the final product supports the department's long-term strategic objectives and enhances its emergency response capabilities.

ESTABLISH A REASONABLE TIMELINE

The timeline for procuring a new fire truck can vary significantly depending on the project's complexity and the required customization. With these variables, the process can take several months to more than a year, including the initial planning stages. The timeline from when an order is placed to when the vehicle is ready to be delivered will vary by manufacturer.

A timeline's typical milestones include the budget approval, needs assessment, design and customization discussions, the manufacturing process and final inspections. The committee must manage timelines carefully to ensure the apparatus is delivered on time and ready for service.



WHO SHOULD BE ON A FIRE TRUCK COMMITTEE?

Selecting the right members for the Fire Truck Procurement Committee ensures a successful outcome. The committee should be made up of a broad stakeholder group bringing a variety of perspectives and expertise to the table.

This can include:

- Fire department personnel (including a firefighter liaison)
- Financial officers
- Community representatives
- Local government officials
- Mechanic / maintenance team members

Each member should be chosen based on his or her ability to contribute valuable insights and experience in relevant areas. The primary focus for committee members should be a successful procurement outcome.

Including a mechanic on the committee is particularly important. A mechanic's expertise will help the committee understand the department's technical and mechanical needs. Additionally, including a firefighter liaison to act as the voice of the firefighters can help garner a summary of their wants and needs.

As you evaluate possible apparatus options, use past experiences to guide the current build, leading to continuous improvement and a better final product.



“Look at previous builds and evaluate what works and what didn’t.”

- Darby Hepper, Sales Representative, Hughes Fire Equipment

The committee must maintain a single focus from the initial planning stages to the final truck delivery. This unified approach keeps everyone working toward the same goals, reducing the likelihood of miscommunication or misunderstandings.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Consistency with the team and the leadership throughout the fire truck procurement process will go a long way in achieving the desired outcome. A cohesive team with a unified vision helps streamline the decision-making process, resulting in a final product aligned with department needs, without unnecessary complications or delays.

“Keep the procurement team consistent and narrow. The department trusts the committee members selected to make the best decisions for their department based on their needs and the information available to them. Allowing too many members on the committee creates challenges with decision making, and having a rotation of members can create changes in decisions, affecting project timelines and budget overruns.”

- Matt Sauter, Business Unit Director for Cab, Chassis & Electrical, Pierce Manufacturing



UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY NEEDS

A procurement committee is tasked with understanding apparatus requirements to serve the community's needs effectively. Conducting a thorough needs assessment is the best method to obtain this information.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Your needs assessment should include an examination of:

- The size and layout of your community.
- Any geographic challenges, such as rural areas with limited access or densely populated urban centers.
- An evaluation of the typical incidents in your areas, such as whether they involve residential fires, industrial accidents or natural disasters.
- Review current capabilities and gaps.
- Consider future growth projections and community changes.

A comprehensive assessment will clarify what your new apparatus needs to manage and how it can best support your department's response efforts.

By carefully assessing your community's current and future needs, reviewing existing capabilities and planning for growth, the fire truck you select will be well-equipped to protect your community for years to come.

Once you've assessed your community's needs, the next step is to define the specific requirements for your new fire truck. This involves making key decisions about the type of truck, its technical specifications and any additional equipment it will carry.

Need a reference source to help define these requirements? Check out the **Pierceopedia** for an alphabetical guide to fire truck terminology.

DEFINE FIRE TRUCK REQUIREMENTS

Selecting the appropriate type of fire truck is essential, as each type serves a different purpose. Understanding the roles of each type helps you select the truck to best fit your department's mission. **Pierce's Guide to Fire Apparatus Design** can help introduce these elements to your committee members.

FIRE TRUCK SPECIFICATIONS

Once you've decided on the type of truck, you'll need to define its technical specifications. Key factors to consider include:

- Chassis
- Engine power
- Water capacity
- Pump and hose configuration

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS

Beyond the basic specifications, your committee will also need to work with firefighters to consider additional equipment the truck needs to carry. This could include:

- Tools for firefighting and rescue operations
- Medical aid support
- Ladders for accessing difficult-to-reach areas
- Foam systems for handling specific types of fires

These features must be carefully selected so the truck is fully equipped to handle the range of incidents your department might face. When defining your fire truck's requirements, the focus should be on what's most important and what the truck should be built around.

“Prioritize and rank the top three to five design features that need to be accomplished and use those items as your ‘North Star’ when making other decisions for the build. Safety or fleet commonality are great examples when directing the committee on what to do for your department.”

- Matt Sauter, Business Unit Director for Cab, Chassis & Electrical, Pierce Manufacturing

By focusing on key priorities and defining clear requirements, your committee can ensure every decision during the build process aligns with your department’s overall goals.

OEM SITE VISIT

An OEM site visit is a significant part of the fire truck procurement process. Whether your department already understands its needs or is still exploring options, visiting the manufacturer’s facility offers valuable insights which can shape your decisions and ensure you make informed choices. We also suggest checking out Pierce Manufacturing’s **guide** to our fire truck manufacturing process, which will provide you with a great introduction.

A FACT-FINDING MISSION

If your department already knows what it needs in a fire truck, the OEM site visit becomes an opportunity to confirm those requirements and explore how the manufacturer can meet them. However, for many departments, the visit serves as a fact-finding mission. It’s a chance to gather information, ask questions and refine the committee’s understanding of its apparatus needs.

DISCOVER NEW ADVANCEMENT AND TECHNOLOGIES

During your visit, take the time to learn about the latest advancements in fire truck technology. Manufacturers are constantly innovating, and visiting the OEM site allows you to see these innovations up close. From improved safety features to enhanced performance capabilities, understanding what’s available can help you make more informed decisions when finalizing your fire truck specifications.

TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORING FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Engaging with neighboring fire departments can provide valuable insights as you plan your fire truck procurement. Nearby departments often face similar challenges and environments, making their experiences highly relevant to your decision-making process. By learning from their successes and challenges, your committee can make more informed choices about the features and capabilities your new apparatus should include.

Start by asking your neighboring departments about the types of trucks they currently use. Understanding what has worked well for them can guide your own decisions. Ask about the features they find most beneficial and how those features have helped them in their day-to-day operations.

As you discuss options with neighboring departments and manufacturers, remember, fire truck customization offers many possibilities.



BUDGET AND FINANCING

Creating a solid budget and exploring financing options are essential steps in the fire truck procurement process. Proper financial planning ensures your department can afford the right apparatus to meet its needs without straining resources.

ESTABLISH A BUDGET

The first step in your financial planning is to establish a budget. Start by gathering initial cost estimates for the different fire truck models you're considering, along with the necessary equipment and customizations. This will give you a clarified picture of what to expect financially and help guide your decision-making process. Remember, costs can vary significantly depending on the type of apparatus, features and manufacturer, so it's important to gather accurate information early on.

EXPLORE FUNDING OPTIONS

Once you have a budget, it's time to explore the various funding options available to your department. This can include:

- Grants
- Loans
- Municipal bonds
- Community fundraising efforts
- Consortiums

CREATE A PROJECT COST ESTIMATION

Beyond the initial budget, you must develop a detailed project cost estimation. This should include the base price of the fire truck, any additional equipment and the cost of customizations. Understanding these costs upfront helps prevent surprises later in the process.

CONSIDER LONG-TERM FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Consider long-term financial planning in the budget process. This includes accounting for ongoing maintenance, operational costs and potential future upgrades. Fire trucks are long-term investments, and planning for their entire lifecycle ensures your department is prepared for future expenses. By thinking ahead, you can avoid unexpected costs and keep your apparatus in top condition for years.

You can explore these concepts in detail by reviewing the blog post here:
The Order Lifecycle of a Fire Truck

THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Procuring a new fire truck is a structured and detailed process involving several important steps. Each step ensures clear communication between your department and potential manufacturers, resulting in transparency and competitive pricing.

ADVERTISING BEGINS

The procurement process requires you to publicly disclose your department's requirements. The procurement committee should advertise the need for a new fire truck, outlining the basic specifications and customization requests. This step informs potential manufacturers and suppliers about your department's needs and initiates the procurement process.

REQUESTS ARE PUT OUT TO BID

Once the procurement needs are advertised, the committee should compile **a detailed proposal for the fire truck purchase**. This proposal includes specific requirements such as the type of apparatus, technical specifications and any custom features essential to your department. The proposal is then sent out to manufacturers to solicit bids. This allows the manufacturers to provide offers based on your department's criteria.

THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION ARE OPENED

After the bids are submitted, communication between the procurement committee and the manufacturers begins. During this phase, **the committee may receive questions from manufacturers** regarding the specifications, timelines, budgets and insurance requirements. This back-and-forth dialogue is essential for clarifying any uncertainties and ensuring all parties are on the same page. It also provides an opportunity to discuss any potential modifications to the proposal.

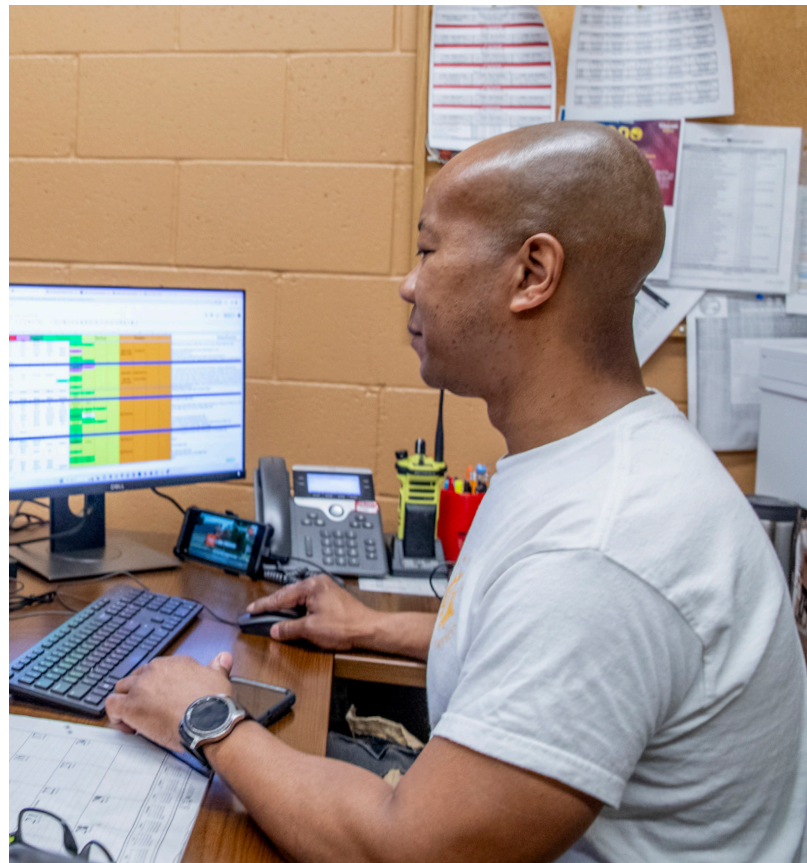
“The one piece of advice I would give would be to make sure the committee members are all on the same page and to have someone – chief, assistant chief or even just a vocal community leader – help guide the process and keep the team on track.”

-Jeremy Van Handel, Requirement Manager Associate, Pierce Manufacturing

PROPOSALS ARRIVE FOR REVIEW

Once all questions have been addressed, **manufacturers will submit their final proposals** based on the specifications outlined by your committee. These proposals will include detailed information on the apparatus they can provide, how they plan to meet the customization requests, timelines for delivery and cost estimates. The procurement committee will then review these proposals carefully, comparing them against the department's requirements and the initial needs assessment. This review process is critical for selecting the best offer to meet your department's operational and financial needs.

By following these steps, your department can confidently navigate the procurement process, ensuring the final decision is well-informed and aligns with your community's needs.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND APPROVAL

Engaging with the community is vital to the fire truck procurement process. Securing public support and ensuring transparency helps gain approval and fosters trust between the fire department and the community it serves.

Here's a great way to approach community engagement and approval effectively:

- **Community Conversations.** Keep the community informed throughout the procurement process. Communicate the reasons behind purchasing a new fire truck and outline its benefits to public safety. Regular updates through local media, social media and community newsletters can help maintain transparency and keep the community aware of how the new apparatus will enhance emergency response capabilities.
- **Use Feedback Mechanisms.** Establish clear feedback mechanisms to build public support and address concerns. Organizing public meetings, forums or surveys allows community members to share their thoughts and ask questions about the procurement process.
- **Maintain Transparency and Documentation.** Keep detailed records of all decisions, communications and financial expenditures. Making this information accessible to the public reinforces transparency and accountability. By documenting every step and sharing these records with the community, you demonstrate the process is fair, open and in the public's best interest.
- By actively engaging with the community, establishing feedback mechanisms and maintaining transparency, your department will build public support and ensure a smooth approval process for the new fire truck.



LEGAL AND COMPLIANCE ISSUES

The truck procurement process requires your committee to navigate legal and compliance issues. You must ensure the new apparatus meets all regulatory requirements and is properly insured. This will protect your department and has broader implications for community safety and financial stability.

Here are the key regulatory requirements you should be familiar with:

- **National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):** As a global nonprofit organization, the NFPA provides vital resources, research, training and education to enhance the safety of communities and first responders, ensuring best practices are followed in fire prevention and emergency response. Their guidelines are widely adopted and enforced, promoting uniformity and safety in building codes, fire equipment and procedures.
- **Underwriter's Laboratories (UL):** A global safety science leader, Underwriter's Laboratories is the most recognized third-party testing organization in the fire service industry. Through its comprehensive evaluation process, UL verifies fire apparatus components comply with industry regulations, thereby enhancing the safety and reliability of emergency response vehicles.

Your committee should also consider how the new fire truck might impact your community's Insurance Services Office (ISO) or **Public Protection Classification (PPC)** score. The PPC or ISO score is a factor insurance companies use to set property insurance premiums for residential and commercial properties. A well-equipped, compliant fire truck can positively influence this score, potentially lowering insurance premiums for your community.



FINALIZE THE PURCHASE

The final stage involves negotiating and signing the purchase contract. This step affirms the decisions made throughout the procurement process and aligns the terms between the committee, the department and the manufacturer.

It's essential to review all aspects of the agreement in detail during contract negotiation. This includes the fire truck's finalized specifications, pricing, payment terms, delivery schedules and warranty information. At this time, any additional services the manufacturer will provide should be clarified, such as training for operating the new apparatus or ongoing maintenance support.



“It's easy to change something on the whiteboard—once it's sheetmetal, the costs increase and it impacts lead times. Clear communication and a thorough review during the final stages help prevent misunderstandings and ensure all parties are satisfied with the terms.”

Once the contract has been thoroughly reviewed and all terms are agreed upon, the final step is signing the contract. This formalizes the purchase and sets the wheels in motion for the manufacturing and delivery of the fire truck. Maintaining good communication with the manufacturer is vital to make certain the truck is built according to your department's specifications and delivered on time. With the contract signed, your department can look forward to receiving a new apparatus designed to successfully serve your community.

Review our helpful **order lifecycle guide** to review all the steps involved in working with Pierce Manufacturing.

FIRE TRUCK BUILD PROCESS

When you choose to work with Pierce Manufacturing, you're partnering with a company which has developed a unique pre-construction and build methodology. Our detailed and structured approach process considers every detail, and every need is met from the initial contract review to the final inspection:

- **Contract and Order Review.** During this stage, our team reviews every aspect of your order to confirm all specifications, pricing and terms are clearly understood and agreed upon. This step sets the foundation of the entire build process, ensuring Pierce Manufacturing and your department are aligned on the final product.
- **Approval Package and Pre-Construction Visit.** Following the contract review, we move into the approval package stage and schedule a pre-construction visit. This visit is an opportunity for your team to collaborate directly with our engineers and production staff to finalize the details of your fire truck.

To get the most out of your pre-construction meeting, **it's important to come prepared.** Assemble a cohesive group of decision-makers who are well-versed in your department's needs and have a clear agenda for the meeting. While addressing each feature is important, try not to get too focused on any single item. Instead, manage all the features collectively. This approach supports a build to meet as many of the project's needs without getting bogged down. This is also an excellent time to see what other departments are doing and gather ideas. Fire trucks often serve multiple roles—like giant Swiss Army knives—carrying everything from water and extrication equipment to medical supplies. It's important to consider all these functions during the pre-construction phase.

- **Detailed Engineering.** After the pre-construction visit, Pierce Manufacturing's engineering team turns your specifications into detailed engineering plans. This phase involves translating your vision into a precise blueprint guiding the manufacturing process. Our engineers ensure every design aspect is functional, meets safety standards and aligns with your department's operational needs.



“As long as we are not breaking the laws of physics, we can do almost any customization.”

- Jason Blank, Senior Manager of Fleet Sales , Pierce Manufacturing

- **Manufacturing.** Once the engineering plans are finalized, the truck moves into the manufacturing stage. At Pierce Manufacturing, our seven-point manufacturing process is known for its precision and quality. Each truck is built to the exact specifications outlined in the engineering plans, with careful attention to detail at every step. Our experienced technicians and craftsmen work diligently to ensure your fire truck is constructed to the highest safety and performance standards.
- **Final Inspection.** The final inspection is one of the most important stages of the build process. This is your opportunity to review the completed truck and ensure it meets all your expectations. Typically, this inspection takes one to two days. We recommend bringing a small group of decision-makers to ensure a smooth process. Too many voices can dilute the inspection's value and slow decision-making. Your final inspection is part of a three-step process we use.

Interested in learning more about final inspections?
Review our **comprehensive blog on the topic here.**

“Change isn’t a bad thing, and it’s often needed. But timing is key in the success of our process: we need change requests at an appropriate time to get people what they need when they need it. Our team is equipped to handle most modifications, but clear communication and understanding of the scope are essential at this stage.”

- Jeremy Van Handel, Requirement Manager Associate, Pierce Manufacturing

By following a structured build process, Pierce Manufacturing ensures every fire truck is built to match the requested specifications and delivers the performance and reliability the department needs to serve its community effectively.

TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION

After your new fire truck is built and delivered, all personnel should be thoroughly trained on its features and capabilities to successfully integrate the apparatus into your department operations.

Proper training and thoughtful apparatus deployment are essential to maximize the effectiveness of your new equipment as it enhances your department's capabilities.

Pierce Manufacturing offers comprehensive training programs to familiarize your team with every aspect of the new apparatus. This training covers everything from basic operations and safety protocols to using specialized equipment installed on the truck. Training gives every firefighter the confidence and capabilities to safely use the new apparatus, enhancing overall safety and effectiveness during emergencies.

Once your team is trained, it's time to safely integrate the new fire truck into your current fleet and operational protocols. Deployment involves more than just adding the truck to your lineup; it requires careful planning to fit the apparatus seamlessly into your department's existing workflows. This may involve updating response plans, adjusting maintenance schedules and aligning operational protocols with the new equipment's capabilities. Proper deployment ensures your new fire truck enhances your department's readiness and response.



HOW TO ENSURE SUCCESS AFTER DELIVERY

Even after your new fire truck is delivered, achieving long-term success involves being proactive and planning ahead.

BE AWARE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Fire service technology is constantly evolving. Staying informed about the latest advancements will help your department take

full advantage of new features and innovations which may improve operational efficiency and safety. Regularly reviewing new technologies and considering how they might be integrated into future builds or retrofitted into existing apparatus can keep your department at the forefront of firefighting capabilities.

OBSERVE CHANGES TO STRATEGIC FIRE OPERATIONS

Over time, your department's strategies and operational needs may evolve due to personnel adjustments, changes in community demographics or shifts in response protocols. The fire truck you've just received might not need modifications immediately, but these changes could influence the specifications of future apparatus builds.

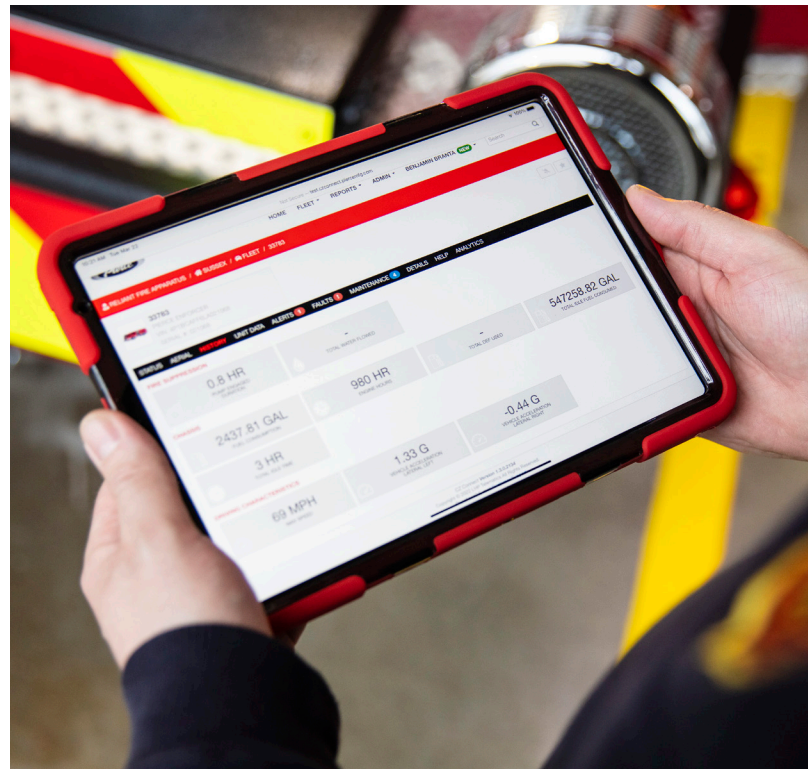
PROMOTE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AFTER DELIVERY

Taking delivery of your new truck doesn't mean the refinement process ends. As your team begins using the apparatus, you may discover certain features are underutilized or the apparatus needs more of a particular resource, like additional storage or equipment. These observations are valuable and should be documented for consideration in future builds or upgrades. Engaging with your dealer about these findings can ensure any lessons learned are applied as you consider your next apparatus order.

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

After your new fire truck has been delivered and integrated into your operations, ongoing evaluation and feedback are essential for continued effectiveness. At Pierce Manufacturing, we strongly emphasize performance monitoring and continuous improvement to help your department maintain peak operational efficiency.

- **Establishing a performance monitoring system.** Take the time to regularly assess how well the truck meets your department's operational needs. Tracking metrics such as response times, equipment



functionality and maintenance requirements can provide valuable insights into the truck's performance. Using a connectivity solution, like **Pierce® ClearSky Intelligence™**, can help firefighters identify areas of improvement and ensure fire trucks are operating at the highest level.

- **Establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback.** Gather input from your firefighters and other personnel who use the truck daily and use their experiences to inform potential updates or adjustments. This feedback loop not only helps in maintaining the current vehicle but also provides critical insights for future builds.

By focusing on performance monitoring and embracing continuous improvement, your department can maximize the effectiveness of your fire truck. Pierce Manufacturing values this ongoing dialogue with our customers, as it ensures our apparatus continues to meet the evolving needs of every customer.

Procuring a new fire truck is a complex and multifaceted process which requires careful planning, thorough evaluation and strong community engagement. From the initial stages of assessing your community's needs and establishing a budget to the detailed steps of the procurement process and the final inspection, each phase supports your department and its operational goals. Working with a trusted partner like Pierce Manufacturing, with our structured build process and commitment to continuous improvement, ensures your department receives a high-quality, mission-ready fire truck designed to serve your community effectively for years to come.

As your department progresses with your fire truck procurement process, maintaining open communication, focusing on long-term planning and staying adaptable to future needs will be key to your success. By embracing these principles, you can ensure your new fire truck meets your current requirements and enhances your department's ability to respond to emergencies and protect your community well into the future.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN SECURING THE BEST FIRE TRUCK FOR YOUR DEPARTMENT?

Partner with your local Pierce Manufacturing experienced dealer to ensure you receive an apparatus tailored to your community's needs. With our proven process, commitment to quality and dedication to customer satisfaction, Pierce Manufacturing is your trusted partner in fire truck procurement.



PERFORM. LIKE NO OTHER.