



▲ PDS upfits approximately 1,000 emergency vehicles per year with a targeted upfit turnaround of five days.



TOTAL UPFITTING FOR ALL MAKES
AND KINDS OF EMERGENCY VEHICLE

PDS

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OPEN HOUSE

▶ BY POLICE FLEET MANAGER STAFF

Police Department Systems (PDS) has been upfitting police (patrol and detective), fire and EMS emergency vehicles since 1999. Their large customers include the Chicago Police Department, the Lake County, Ill. Sheriff's Department, and the Tinley Park, Ill. Police. PDS performs approximately 1,000 emergency vehicle upfits a year.

PDS is the primary vehicle upfitter for Chicagoland's Thomas Dodge, Sutton Ford, Currie Ford, Metro Ford and Jacobs Chevrolet. PDS is a ship-thru location for Chevy, Dodge and Ford. Especially through Thomas Dodge, PDS does upfitting for vehicles headed coast to coast and border to border, including Alaska.

While PDS has long been associated with Thomas Dodge, half of their upfitting business is a vehicle other than Dodge.

Open House

In 2011, PDS was purchased by Chicago Parts & Sound (CPS), the large Ford Motorcraft distributor and Ford authorized accessory installer. One of the benefits of joining CPS was the 2014 relocation a few miles away into a facility five times as large.

The open house for the new facility was held in conjunction with the Midwest Security and Police Conference & Expo, presented by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police. On hand at the PDS open house were demo vehicles from Code 3, Havis, Whelen and Star Signal.

The new facility is 29,000 square feet, which is enough space to comfortably upfit 20 vehicles at the same time. Just as important, the new facility has enough parking to store 300 vehicles. PDS currently employs a staff of 15.

Upfits and Packages

PDS has recommended lighting packages, but they also go by customer request. When the police department or sheriff's office really doesn't have a preference for a particular aftermarket company, PDS has a basic upfit plan. The lightbars they install are a three-way tie between FedSig Legend, Whelen Liberty, and Code 3 2700. Regardless of make of lightbar, PDS typically installs the FedSig PA640 light/siren controller and FedSig ES100 siren.

▼ PDS has recommended light and siren packages, but can upfit any make of product specified by the department.





▲ PDS makes their own wiring harnesses and provides full schematics with every vehicle.

1/3 square

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Most of the consoles and trunk trays are from Havis. The push bumpers are generally from Setina or DeeZee. The prisoner partitions typically come from Setina or Pro-gard. With so many crossovers and SUVs now in patrol use, the demand for cargo storage and gun lockers has likewise grown; PDS uses Automated Weapon Security. PDS also installs communications equipment as well as the entire spectrum of emergency equipment.

Bids and Best Practices

The PDS average upfit turnaround time is two to five days. PDS makes certain the departments actually get what they want, even if it requires calls to question the request for quote and bid specs.

PDS strictly follows the “Dozen Best Practices for Vehicle Upfitting,” the police department’s “Bill of Rights.” This checklist was previously published in Police Fleet Manager. (See www.hendonpub.com, Resources, Article Archives, key words: Best Practices.

They make their own wiring harnesses, and a wiring schematic is provided. The technicians use the correct wire size on their custom cables; they solder and shrink wrap all connections; and use split-loom to protect all cables. All electrical devices are properly fused.

PDS makes some custom parts for the upfit, such as brackets when necessary to make the part fit into the car. Most upfitters know that universal brackets are not... universal. These custom brackets are often made to properly mount equipment, while paying strict attention to airbag zones.

The company knows that poor battery and alternator life are frequently due to improper upfits because it fixes many local police vehicles upfitted improperly. As such, it uses battery protection devices and calculates proper current loads.

As far as documentation being provided with the upfit, PDS gives the customer brochures or manuals on the equipment, which come from the manufacturer or factory. They do not provide their own documentation. PDS acts as a warranty/repair station for the major brands of upfitted gear.



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