

APCO

MEMBER CHAPTER SERVICES Committee

December newsletter

911 PULSE CHECK

Hello APCO members!

This month, we're chatting about AI, and we want to hear from you! Take a minute (seriously, it's quick!) to answer our short poll and share your thoughts.

We're hoping to get one response per agency, and your input helps us spotlight what matters most to our community.

We'll share the results in next month's newsletter - can't wait to see what everyone says!

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MCSCAI

Thanks for being part of the conversation!

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Membership momentum

Membership Type	Previous Year 11/01/2024	This Year 11/01/2025
Associate Members	2,346	2,100
Full Members	4,234	3,799
Full Group Members	9,998	10,276
Online Group Members	24,169	25,241
Commercial Members	461	437
Commercial Group Members	354	396
Student/Educator Members	33	43
Total Number of Members	41,595	42,292
Total Number of Group Agencies	1,753	1,776
Commercial Groups	53	57

Straight from the CAC

We Are Pleased to Meet You!

By Joe Jackson

APCO International prides itself on bringing people together in the field of public safety and thankfully has many community members dedicated to making that happen. The Commercial Advisory Council (CAC) is a team full of people who care and help to expand this core value of APCO. In addition to their work on planning, expanding, and facilitating member involvement, the CAC member's collective experience makes for a great network of resources and connections. Over the next few months, the CAC would like to take a moment to highlight some of its members to shed a little light on their experience and positions within the industry.



Mark Hannah

As a Senior Emergency Communications Consultant for AECOM with over 40 years in the emergency communications business, I collaborate with clients to provide advice and guidance on ways to solve their emergency communications problems. Projects range from 9-1-1 centers to wide area radio networks and everything in between. As a large A&E firm, we provide services in many different areas of critical infrastructure, nearly all involving some form of communications.

Joe Jackson

I have been working with The Spectrum Firm since 2012, assisting with sales and as a Licensing and Operations Associate. It has been great to get a more hands on connection to our industry. Our company works as a liaison through every step of the FCC licensing process and over the years have worked with a wide variety of people in need of assistance. The CAC has been a great opportunity to expand my knowledge base and work with an amazing team, using my background in journalism to facilitate articles being published for the council and helping our membership group connect with more and more people.





Manny Vierra

Manny is a high-level executive and entrepreneur who has more than 30 years experience in the wireless and public safety communication industries. He has been instrumental in mentoring many companies and agencies while they develop and implement their communication systems. He has been a longtime member of National APCO. Manny has served as the CCAM for Northern California APCO for the past 10 years. In his capacity as the CCAM, he has chaired the Regional Showcase and Conference.

Jason Bernard

I started my career in Public Safety as a Police Officer before transitioning to the commercial side of the industry. I worked for 10 years as a Senior Account Manager on Motorola's NG911, CAD, and Mobile Video sales teams. In July of this year, I made an exciting move to WSI Technologies, providing 911 centers with vital recording equipment. I previously served eight years on the Commercial Advisory Council, and served as both Chair and Vice Chair during that time. I am beginning a one-year term as an Associate Member with the goal to continue to serve the APCO community for many years to come!





Greg Farmer

I am a Business Development Director for L3Harris and have worked with Public Safety customers since 1994. Creating technology solutions to help solve public safety communications problems and increase their personnel safety and mission effectiveness is what I love doing.

Stay tuned next month to meet more of our CAC members!

CYBER INTEL Corner



Shielding the Lifeline: Part 1

By Matt Dean

Security for Public Safety Land Mobile Radio Systems

Land Mobile Radio (LMR) systems are the undisputed communication backbone for public safety. They provide the critical push-to-talk (PTT) capability that police, fire, and emergency medical services rely on daily - and especially during major incidents. The transition from analog to highly advanced digital trunked systems, notably those adhering to the Project 25 (P25) standard, has brought immense capability, but it has also introduced complex security challenges. These systems, once considered isolated and inherently secure, are now recognized as critical infrastructure with an expansive threat surface demanding a multi-layered security strategy.

The security of public safety LMR systems is assessed using the foundational confidentiality, integrity, and availability (CIA) triad. An attack on any of these three pillars can compromise a mission and endanger lives. Modern LMR systems are essentially interconnected networks susceptible to cyberattacks that were once reserved for enterprise IT:

- Unauthorized Monitoring and Eavesdropping: While analog radio traffic can be easily scanned, digital systems face threats from sophisticated techniques aimed at circumventing encryption or exploiting implementation flaws. An adversary eavesdropping on tactical communications can anticipate and disrupt an emergency response, jeopardizing responder and public safety.
- **Denial-of-Service (DoS) and Jamming:** DoS attacks on the network control center or infrastructure can cripple the ability of the trunked system to assign channels, effectively silencing responders. Intentional radio jamming, while an old tactic, remains a highly effective method to disrupt availability, forcing communication into less-secure, low-power modes.
- Credential Abuse and Network Intrusion: As LMR networks integrate with IP backbones for features like
 dispatching and key management, they become exposed to conventional IT threats. Attacks like password
 spraying and exploitation of insecure remote access methods such as misconfigured VPNs can provide
 unauthorized access to system controls, allowing an attacker to modify configurations or insert rogue
 devices.
- Radio Cloning and Impersonation: In trunked systems, malicious actors can clone or duplicate authorized radio IDs to gain unauthorized access. This compromises Integrity and Availability, allowing a rogue user to listen in, transmit false commands, or flood the system, disrupting legitimate traffic.

Next month we will look at the Operational and Physical controls related to LMR and how equally vital they are to keeping your radio systems secured.

Matt Dean serves as a member of the Cybersecurity Committee. He is in the Information and Communications Technology Services field and is also a volunteer with the Watchung Rescue Squad in Watchung, New Jersey.

References

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Health Wellness



Welcoming 1st Year Telecommunicators During the Holidays

By Erica Johnson

Starting a new job is always a mix of excitement and nerves - but beginning a career in public safety communications during the holiday season can bring its own unique challenges. For many first-year telecommunicators, this may be the first time they're away from family traditions and celebrations. That adjustment can be tough.

As seasoned professionals, we have an opportunity - and a responsibility - to help ease that transition. Including new team members in your center's holiday traditions can go a long way in making them feel welcome and supported. Whether it's inviting them to participate in a potluck, decorating the center, or joining in on a holiday game, small gestures can make a big impact.

It's easy to forget what it felt like to be new, especially during the holidays. But we've all been there. A simple check-in, a warm invitation, or even letting the newest team member judge the ugly sweater contest can help them feel like part of the team. Maybe they get to draw the first number in the white elephant exchange - small roles that help build connection and community.

And to our first-year telecommunicators: if you're finding it hard to adjust, please don't hesitate to speak up. Find a peer or a supervisor you trust and let them know how you're feeling. You're not alone and your voice matters. Don't shy away from joining in - your presence is valued, and your participation helps shape the culture of your center.

We're glad you're here. We want you to be involved - not just this holiday season, but for many more to come.



Holiday Cheer & Hot Mics: Finding Joy at the Console

By Erica Johnson

The holiday season is fast approaching, and with it comes the anticipation of festive gatherings, cherished traditions, and let's be honest - some really great food. But for those of us in public safety communications, the holidays can also bring a sense of missing out. Working one - or even all - of the major holidays can be tough, especially when it means time away from family and long-standing traditions.

Still, there are ways to bring the holiday spirit into the comm center and create new memories with your work family. Here are a few ideas to help make the season a little brighter:

Host a Holiday Meal or Party

If there's one thing that brings people together, it's food. Many agencies already organize potlucks or catered meals for those working on Thanksgiving or Christmas - and it's always appreciated. Sharing a warm meal during a shift can foster connection and lift spirits.

Ugly Sweater or Best Dressed Contest

A little friendly competition never hurts. Break out your most outrageous holiday sweater or festive outfit and bring some laughter to the room. Consider offering a small prize, like a gift card, to keep things fun and lighthearted.

Secret Santa or White Elephant Gift Exchange

Gift exchanges don't have to be expensive to be meaningful. Set a modest spending limit - \$15 to \$20 is plenty - and enjoy the surprise and camaraderie that comes with giving (and receiving) something thoughtful or silly. Pro tip: TikTok is full of creative stocking stuffer ideas. Ask me how I know.

On-Shift Games and Activities

Who says you can't have fun while working? Bring in a board game, create a holiday-themed bingo card, or get creative with something like decorating an "ugly sweater" on a willing coworker. These kinds of activities can boost morale and bring the team closer together.

Decorate the Center

If your agency allows it, a few decorations, a holiday playlist, and maybe a crockpot of hot cocoa can go a long way in setting a festive tone. It doesn't take much to make the space feel warm and welcoming.

No matter how you choose to celebrate, remember that everyone is giving up something to be at work during the holidays. This season can be especially difficult for some, so let's lead with kindness, patience, and a willingness to create new traditions together.



Erica Johnson is a Telecommunicator with the Raleigh-Wake 911 Center in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Remembering Our Past

A Lasting Impact on APCO and Public Safety Radio

By Charles Venske, RPL, ENP

Mark's story with APCO began in 1987, when he joined the Florida Chapter and quickly immersed himself in the work he loved. From his earliest days, he was the kind of member who showed up, leaned in, and helped build the foundation for stronger public safety communications. His passion led him to serve on numerous Chapter committees, including multiple Chapter and regional conference committees.

Over the years, Mark's APCO journey brought him across the country - from Florida to Arizona, and finally to Nevada, where he found a chapter that became home. There, he took on several leadership positions, including two terms as chapter president and later treasurer. His commitment to APCO extended beyond local roles; Mark played key parts in two Las Vegas annual conferences, serving as Communications Chair for the 75th Annual Conference and later as Co-Chair of the 2018 Annual Conference, the same year he ran for 2nd Vice President.

Mark's influence reached even further at the national level. He contributed several years of service to the APCO Spectrum Management Committee, first as a member and ultimately as Chair, and he also served on PDEC. In recognition of his dedication, Mark earned both the Senior Member and Life Member designations - honors that reflect not just time served, but true commitment. Outside of APCO, he was named a Fellow of the Radio Club of America, a distinction reserved for those who have made significant contributions to the industry.

Beyond APCO, Mark built an extraordinary career in public safety communications. He began his work with New York City Civil Defense and went on to serve Union City, New Jersey, as well as Broward and Miami-Dade Counties in Florida. Throughout his career, Mark shared his expertise generously - training emergency teams, 911 personnel, dispatchers, and new police officers on essential radio operations.



Mark David Pallans, APCO Life Member

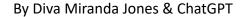
He helped develop Broward County's backup 911 Center and played a key role in designing and procuring one of the first public safety 800 MHz radio systems.

At Miami-Dade, Mark led the transition from analog to a state-of-the-art digital system, and later, as Nevada's statewide radio system administrator, he continued shaping the backbone of public safety communications. He continued as a consultant for smaller agencies that relied on his knowledge to modernize their systems.

Born in Astoria, New York, Mark carried a lifetime of experience, curiosity, and dedication with him. He passed away in Las Vegas on October 18, 2021, at the age of 78, leaving behind a legacy shaped by service and innovation. He is survived by his loving wife, Gayle, and by the countless colleagues, friends, and agencies whose work continues to benefit from his life's mission.

9-1-1 Unplugged

Twas the Night Before Christmas (Dispatch Edition)









'Twas the shift before Christmas, when all through the comm,

Not a headset was buzzing - well... except for one. The radios crackled with holiday cheer,
As dispatchers settled in for the longest night of the year.

The CAD screens were glowing with soft amber light,

While call-takers sipped cocoa and prepped for the night.

With maps at the ready and units in queue, We braced for whatever the evening might brew.

When out on the channel there arose such a clatter.

We sprang to our keyboards to see what was the matter.

A trooper called in with a voice full of fright: "A runaway sleigh just zoomed out of sight!"

We typed up the details, sent units with care, Hoping they'd reach him before he took to the air. Reports soon came in from neighbors and folks: "A man in red robes is telling reindeer jokes!" Officers searched every rooftop and yard,
While medics checked on a man stuck in a chimney ...turns out the landing was hard.
Fire crews giggled but handled it quick,

Then suddenly—quiet. All channels went still.

No calls, no car stops, no alarms from the hill.

We leaned back a moment, enjoying the peace,

A rare little gift when emergencies cease.

Assuring us it definitely wasn't St. Nick.

But just as we thought we'd get calm for the night,
A jolly voice boomed on the statewide outright:
"Dispatch, we're good! I've found my old sleigh.
Your folks saved Christmas—Merry Christmas, I say!"

We smiled at the radios, warmed by the sound, Knowing our work helps keep magic around. And as units cleared calls and the night rolled along, We finished warrant entries like a well-practiced song.

So here's to the dispatchers, steady and bright - Merry Christmas to all, and to all a safe night!

Teammates in Action

Morgan Norris

from Johnson County Emergency Communications Center



On April 8, 2024, Johnson County, Arkansas, found itself in the national spotlight as residents and visitors gathered to witness the rare event of a total solar eclipse. Just fifteen minutes after totality passed, however, the county experienced a very different kind of emergency—one that would test the skill, composure, and teamwork of our small PSAP.

Shortly after takeoff from the Johnson County Airport, a small personal aircraft carrying four passengers experienced a catastrophic engine failure. Within minutes, the plane went down in a heavily wooded area only two miles from the runway. All four passengers survived the crash but required extrication, and locating the wreckage quickly became a race against time.

With only four dispatchers on duty, our center was soon flooded with calls. Many of them overflowed to our non-emergency lines, where Morgan—who was not initially stationed on a 9-1-1 terminal—answered one that would quickly become critical. On the other end of the line was a male passenger inside the plane, desperately calling as the aircraft descended. Morgan stayed on the line through the entire crash.

Despite the intensity of the situation, Morgan remained remarkably calm. She continuously relayed vital information to her fellow dispatchers, helping coordinate an effective response. Understanding the difficulty first responders would face in locating the wreckage within thick woods, Morgan instructed the passengers to scream loudly so rescuers could track their location. Her quick thinking proved invaluable.

Morgan stayed connected with the caller until first responders reached the crash site. Thanks in part to her steady guidance and presence, all four passengers were located, extricated, and transported without major injuries.

We never know when a call like this will come in, but when it did, Morgan exemplified the very best of our profession. Her composure, communication, and decisive actions played a crucial role in ensuring a successful outcome.

Please join us in congratulating Morgan on this well-deserved recognition as an APCO Teammates in Action honoree!



Have a teammate in action you want to nominate?

Submit your nomination today at our

<u>Teammates in Action</u> page!

Dispatches of History

Unlock the APCO Vault

By The Historical Committee

The APCO Historical Committee first introduced the Online Museum to members at the 2012 Annual Conference in Minneapolis, celebrating the culmination of more than twenty years of dedicated work by committee members and APCO's Past and Present Historians. Today, the museum lives on the APCO website, where members can explore historical artifacts, stories, and other unique benefits.

APCO VIRTUAL MUSEUM

ABOUT US APCO COLLECTION PRESIDENTS & AWARD WINNERS NEWS GALLERY FAQ CONTACT US



Explore APCO's rich history through the APCO International History web page, where decades of milestones, stories, and achievements come to life.

Discover the APCO History Makers Video Series, dive into the Virtual Museum, or even contribute your own memories and artifacts. From general historical insights to interactive exhibits, the site is a treasure trove for anyone curious about APCO's past and evolution.

Visit <u>apcointl.org</u> and navigate to "About APCO" \rightarrow "Our History" to start your journey.



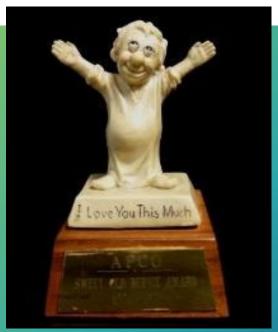




Dive into the **APCO Virtual Museum** and explore a treasure trove of artifacts, photos, and stories from APCO's rich history. Whether you're curious about a specific chapter, conference memorabilia, historic equipment, or notable biographies, the museum makes it easy to uncover the stories behind the items. You can browse by category, search for keywords, or even explore a selection of random images to discover something new. Each click opens a window into the past, bringing APCO's history vividly to life.











State Chapter highlights

Michigan Chapter

The Michigan State Chapter celebrated their telecommunicators last month with an awards ceremony, where excellence took center stage. Mel Maier and Steve Martini were on hand to officially swear in the new board.

















Upcoming Events



Call for Speakers / Presenters

Presentations should explore the future and lessons learned of emergency preparedness and response needs, resources, tools, products, etc. Furthermore, your presentations should also be applicable to a wide audience range to include, but not limited to:

- Public Safety Chief Officers/Directors
- Disaster Planners
- Business Continuity Planners
- Public Safety Dispatchers
- Homeland Security Professionals
- Health and Human Services Providers
- Communications System Specialists
- Crisis and Risk Managers
- Healthcare Disaster Professionals
- Emergency Managers (municipal, county, state, other)
- VOADS (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters
- Meteorologists
- EM Educators
- Contingency Planners

Conference Dates and Location

April 27-29, 2026 at the LIVE! Hotel and Casino in Bossier City, LA



Important Dates

Submissions are due by January 6, 2026

Upcoming Events



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WORKGROUP ABBREVIATIONS

CWG - Chapter Leader's Reference Guide & Chapter Officer Toolkit Working Group **LMC** - Life Member Content Working Group

NWG - Newsletter Working Group

PWG - Polls Working Group

TIA - Teammates in Action Working Group

WEB - Webinars Working Group

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