

NORTHWEST CENTRAL DISPATCHING PROJECT



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(An outstanding paper presented at the First Annual North Central Regional Conference. —Ed.)

ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT The Police Communication Problem

Radio Congestion

Congestion of police radio traffic became a problem when the first base station and the first mobile unit shared the same two-way radio frequency.

The congestion was magnified with the addition of mobile units to that base station. It was compounded by neighboring base stations and their respective mobile

units being added to that same frequency. As good neighbors, they wanted to communicate; as political entities, they wanted their own base stations — their own identities.

Shared Resources— Individual Responsibility

The sharing of air time and the demand for “identity” produced the need for responsibility.

Who was responsible to determine what radio traffic should have priority? Who knew what other traffic was about, if two base stations attempted to transmit simultaneously? . . . While a mobile unit was trying to get thru to the base station?

It became evident that responsibility, as well as the resources, had to be shared.

Need for Objective, Scientific Study of the Problem

There has been no lack of study devoted to the police communication problem. I was aware of this a quarter of a century ago as a rookie patrolman in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I was more aware of this nine years ago when I came to Elk Grove Village, Illinois. Now I was responsible. I had to get involved in the problem without becoming a part of it.

Illinois was studying the problem. One of the first meetings I attended in Illinois, in 1963, was on the problem of police communications — the lack of spectrum space . . . the overcrowded frequencies. Back in 1963, Otto

Community Desire

Rhoades—of the Illinois State Police Communications Division — talked about the problem for 20 minutes. The last time I heard Mr. Rhoades talk on the subject—January, 1970—he talked for an hour and forty minutes. The problem was still unsolved.

Many studies have been made. As far as could be determined, they had all been consigned to the archives.

But Otto Rhoades did not quit—APCO did not quit. There was a need for an objective, scientific study of the problem and APCO, thru its leadership in 1968, obtained Federal Funding from LEAA for APCO Project Three.

Study of the Lake Michigan Metropolitan Area

The Lake Michigan metropolitan area extends from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Gary and Hammond, Indiana; and includes thirteen counties in northeastern Illinois. The area was predicted to become a megalopolis and that prediction is becoming a reality.

An exhaustive study was planned and executed by a committee involving representatives of the entire area. This was Phase One of APCO Project III. It documented the problem in detail.

Recommendations— Coordinated Systems

Phase Two of APCO Project III was the issuing of recommendations designed to reduce, if not solve the problem. The recommenda-

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