



By Martha K. Carter

Expanding the APCO Imprint: Association Improvement and PSAP Problem Solving

APCO International's 84th Annual Conference & Expo is fast approaching, and so is the end of my term as President of APCO International. It seems like just yesterday that we were in Denver and we were discussing our planned initiatives for the upcoming year.

"As you get older, time seems to fly by." My parents used to say this, but now I understand what they meant, since I have experienced it first-hand. I have realized that I am getting older, and I believe that time passes by so quickly because of the fast-paced, ever-changing public safety communications profession in which we work. It seems like we never have enough time to get everything done, because our operations constantly have to adapt to changes in response to increased demand for services by our public, but also in response to the public safety communications technological changes.

Looking at this past year, "time flying by" becomes more relevant. A year ago at this time, the Project 43 report was released at conference and was the culmination of hard, collaborative work by a group of over 70 dedicated public safety practitioners and APCO professional staff. Since that time, the report has been an integral part of APCO's various committees' goals and objectives, especially in the area of industry standards development. Additionally, some of the initiatives that were identified within the report have become works-in-progress, such as the development of a cybersecurity hygiene course for PSAP personnel. APCO is updating and looking at new curricula development related to broadband implications for the PSAP, and Project RETAINS will be updated to incorporate broadband-specific inputs to help address NG9-1-1 staffing issues.

At conference last year, APCO announced its collaboration with IBM in the development of APCO IntelliComm™, a new cognitive criteria-based guidecard software. APCO IntelliComm mirrors current guidecards for EMD, police and fire. We believe that IntelliComm has the potential to revolutionize the way our communications centers can provide life-saving services to our citizens. We are so excited about the implementation of this new product offering for our membership.

As I write my last article, it is natural to want to look back to evaluate what progress we have made, but it is more important to look to the future. Over the past couple of years, the Executive Committee has been working to achieve continuity and consistency in the management of our association. As communications professionals, we provide it in our daily public safety lives, mentoring our employees and planning for continuity of operations in the event of a major emergency or disaster. Why shouldn't we have the same for our association?

This Executive Committee has been focusing on continuity by sharing information and duties so that leading this association is not as daunting of a task for one person as it was in past years prior to APCO's governance change in 2009. This sharing of information and duties has also been extended to your regional Board of Directors, who will hopefully echo this same belief. As a part of this development of continuity, your regional Board of Directors has been called upon to attend conferences and chapter meetings to represent APCO. This has provided them with an opportunity to meet new communications professionals, and also has afforded them with greater association leadership opportunities. By sharing opportunities such as this, we also share the responsibilities and duties. It is our hope that providing leadership development opportunities to more individuals, will encourage more members to consider taking their service to APCO to another level by seeking an elected office as a regional board member or as a member of the Executive Committee.

Our association now supports over 30,000 members, and if we are going to continue to meet the challenges of the ever-changing landscape of technological improvements and the impact of this technology to our emergency communications centers and to our public safety telecommunicators, it is going to take every one of us working together to effectuate change.

Now, I want to talk about the future. APCO continues to be an advocate for our public safety communications community and our members. That advocacy may be in the form of fighting for deserved recognition of our public safety telecommunicators, lobbying Capitol Hill to seek adequate and sustainable funding to help our emergency communications centers transition to next generation technology to serve our citizens, or helping educate our members on the importance of our NG9-1-1 systems having true seamless interoperability.

I am confident in the future of APCO and its advocacy for our membership.

If you talk with people, you will find that we all have the same issues, and while the scale or size of our operations may be different, we are all facing the same problems or challenges.