

APCO ON NATIONAL ISSUES

APCO has adopted positions or expressed opinions on four national telecommunication issues: 911; CB; centralized communications operations and/or management; and frequency coordination.

911:

APCO is of the opinion that 911, as a thing in itself, is difficult to evaluate. Inevitably, the over-riding considerations in this issue become that of centralizing telecommunications operations in order to use the tools as a means to provide a more comprehensive and responsive allocation of public safety emergency resources. Therefore, cost-effectiveness is the real issue. Cost-effectiveness is an aspect of the planning function, and can be evaluated only after all alternatives have been considered.

APCO does believe that 911 will continue to be a service that will be offered to more and more people, in some instances cost-effective or not. When utilized in a well-documented plan, 911 can be a significant tool in effecting a more rapid response to calls for any emergency service. Recognition of this fact is embodied in APCO Telecommunications Goal #1.

CB:

APCO Goal #1 also demonstrates APCO's belief that the general public should be able to access public safety emergency resources by means other than those of land lines. At the present time, CB is the most available means of accomplishing this. More and more states and municipalities are employing CB as an adjunct to their professional

communication systems. APCO's task at present is to work to improve that means of access. We are doing this now. We are also confident that a better RF means of general public access to public safety resources will soon evolve. We will work diligently to speed that possibility.

Centralized Communications:

APCO's national survey of state telecommunication planning in law enforcement, taken during its work in its Project 13, showed that 20 of the 50 states now have some sort of centralized telecommunication planning and administrative function, and that the trend is growing. Centralized communication centers, whether or not initiated by 911 implementations, are also growing in number, for cost-effectiveness reasons and because of improvements in response times. All this, despite the obvious increased but rare risk of total communication failure due to dependence upon the commercial telephone network.

APCO believes these trends will continue, and supports them on the basis of the following reasoning:

- 1) The federal government, and high level state, county and municipal organizations such as the Office of Telecommunications Policy of the Office of the President, the Office of Telecommunications of the Commerce Department, the National Governors' Council, the National League of Cities, the National Association of Counties, etc., are all attempting to devise methods to reduce the costs of government services. Public Safety Communications is just one of the many forms of communications utilized by these governments. These communications systems involve much more than just black boxes and wires. Most of their

costs are due to salaries and personnel benefits. Maintaining the availability of skilled and trained personnel is a costly matter, and procurement is a particularly sensitive area.

Research and development at state, county, and municipal levels is practically non-existent. The state and local government telecommunication level is not a large enough market to attract applicable design or quantitative pricing. It is natural, therefore, for governments to closely weigh the pros and cons of engaging in comprehensive telecommunication planning, of which public safety is only a part, in order to aggregate all telecommunication programs into a more cost-effective operation.

In these matters, APCO's concern, as the foremost representative of public safety communications, is that such overall comprehensive efforts be effectively executed. And, in particular, that such administered programs are based on factual knowledge of the special needs of each public safety communications system. They should not be just the ideas of someone indulging in a pet theory.

Public Safety telecommunicators' careers and livelihoods can be at stake. Communicators should have a means of expressing their views on such plans and administrative operations, based on years of experience in the field, and their responsibility for the eventual success or failure of such programs.

On the other hand, APCO recognizes that these new and increasing developments require changes in old ways of doing business. APCO hopes, through its individual Chapters, to soften these painful realizations, through education and discussion.

Therefore, APCO takes the position in these matters that an APCO Chapter in each state is the best available means of assuring the best possible success of public safety telecommunication programs. Here, in this forum, all elements involved in such planning can come together and work out the most useful alternatives and methods before, rather than after, the fact.

Frequency Coordination:

APCO will continue to provide a police and local government frequency coordination service so long as the Commission's requirements are reasonable, and until such time as the Commission can itself perform the service, as it rightfully should.

APCO will also act as the single coordination point for all of the public safety radio services under these conditions should the Commission make such a request of the Association.

Currently, APCO does not charge public safety radio services applicants for this service.