AFC EXPLAINED

By Michael Scales

The automated frequency coordination division provides radio frequency management for public safety agencies.
During the Annual Conference in Denver, one of our Local Frequency Advisors was asked about the AFC logo on his APCO shirt. As AFC local advisors, our shirts bear the APCO shield along with the AFC logo, and Local Advisor. The conversation progressed to what is AFC and as the other party was a telecommunicator, what does AFC do for them? This was a great question, and the pair discussed the AFC mission in depth. Since this question was asked, we thought we would pass it on to everyone else, so that the staff and volunteer advisors’ mission could be brought to light.

We start with a little history. In 1986, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) saw an uptick in the number of radio license applications and the need for better coordination of frequency uses throughout the country. The FCC requested interested parties to apply as a candidate for certified coordinator. APCO stepped up to the plate and created the Automated Frequency Coordination (AFC) division of APCO that year. As a leader of the police radio service representatives, APCO became the primary coordinator for frequencies assigned to police band radio and for open public safety frequencies. AFC not only processes applications for members, but non-members as well. In later years, the FCC recognized the expertise AFC brought forward with the engineering staff, licensing staff and volunteer local frequency coordinators.

The commission awarded a memorandum of understanding between the commission’s enforcement division and AFC to have the local coordinators conduct the initial investigation into interference complaints. As our webpage indicates, “AFC is the only organization that provides full radio frequency management services for public safety agencies.” Most of these complaints could be handled without the involvement of the commission’s enforcement division. When the parties would actually talk to each other the problems were easily solved. There were of course the exceptions to the rule, which could not be easily corrected, and the enforcement division was notified.

Our main office is in Daytona Beach, Florida, at the APCO headquarters. We house employees who assist agencies in creating an application for a license or a license update, collect interference complaints, provide engineering and P25 reviews, and process coordination. The office maintains contact with the APCO attorneys regarding FCC rules and regulation changes. Farokh Latif is director of the AFC Division. His staff of professionals is augmented by the volunteer Local Frequency Advisors. Most of the work of the AFC staff and local advisors is to provide support to our members and agencies as a whole for the radio spectrum. Local advisors are normally members of the chapters they represent. We provide a local asset to the membership (and other qualified customers) for questions on FCC issues and assist our members with technical knowledge when available. In addition to providing engineering support, most advisors are also licensed amateur radio operators, which enables them to provide valuable information about operations of the radio systems.

The AFC license specialist helps agencies fill out FCC Form 601, which is the application for a new license or updates to existing licenses. Our staff helps collect the necessary information from applicants to speed their application along to the FCC. Sometimes the application becomes a bit technical and by having this resource the applicant can properly submit an application. Small omissions or improper information could hold up an application for several months. Each agency is required to have a license for radio operation. Unlike the amateur radio band, each operator/dispatcher/user is not required to have a separate license but does need approval to use the agency call sign.

Larger projects and P25 digital systems may require engineering and design consulting. We have on our AFC staff engineers and P25 specialists who are available to assist in clarifying Telecommunications Industry Association standards and Project 25 Technology Interest Group best practices. Throughout the entire engineering, licensing and coordination processes AFC remains vendor neutral. We will be more than happy to ensure you know what you are
AFC belongs to the Public Safety Communications Council (PSCC). This council consists of all four of the public safety coordinating organizations: International Municipal Signal Association (IMSA), Forestry Conservation Communications Association (FCCA), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and of course AFC. This council develops the standards by which frequencies in the public safety (Part 90) area of the spectrum are coordinated. The AFC staff diligently participates with the council in these standards. The need for common coordination practice is very important to public safety. This common practice or standard keeps the interference on radio systems to a minimum. In order to promote input from all of our local coordinators, APCO created a standing committee known as the ADCOM or AFC Advisory Committee.

This committee consists of four local advisors from each region (western, eastern, southern and central). Discussions are held on relevant issues from the PSCC, FCC, or proposals to change rules, regulations, or standards. As we all like to keep excessive rules and regulations from hindering operations of agencies, this committee has experienced members that can help review the proposals and suggest a path for APCO to propose to the PSCC or FCC. AFC has been and will continue to promote a streamlined process for applications, operations and standards for agencies using radios. Local advisors attend training before and during their tenure as an advisor. This training includes but is not limited to: FCC rules and regulations, the purpose of the PSCC, the use of the software for coordination, standards for coordination, adjacent state requirements, and annual updates on FCC rule changes. Between the office staff, ADCOM, local advisors, PSCC membership and our APCO legal staff that monitors and works with the FCC, AFC is a leader among the coordinating organizations for Part 90. Changes occur in technology every day. Without the diligence of the AFC these changes could create interference issues which could cripple public safety radio systems.

How does the AFC operation affect a local telecommunicator? APCO believes in a high level of customer service. To meet the expectation for quality customer service, many of the local advisors attempt to provide information services to those who ask. You do not need to be a supervisor, director or administrator to ask those important questions about the FCC rules and regulations or about the way radio systems work. Most of the telecommunicators, supervisors as well as some directors and administrators have never been out of the dispatch center to a repeater site or don’t even know where the base stations they control are actually located. The lack of this knowledge inhibits their ability to work around trouble issues that happen all too often. Most telecommunicators are trained in the operations of their computer screen and a few even have a good idea of what the “backroom” looks like. But do they really have a good concept of what occurs when they press the push to talk (PTT) button on their console? When the PTT is activated, what really happens? Where does “it” happen? What do I do if “it” doesn’t work right (besides call the supervisor)? Are there alternative ways of getting my message through?

**Current Job Listings**

**9-1-1 Telecommunicator**

**Seminole Public Safety Department**

Hollywood, FL; Clewiston, FL; Okeechobee, FL

The incumbent in this position is responsible for performing non-sworn police work and support duties such as public safety dispatch, community relations and property and evidence operations. The incumbent in this position handles inquiries involving police and public safety emergencies within the jurisdiction of all Seminole Tribe of Florida Reservations. The individual monitors several complex public safety radio frequencies; receives emergency and routine calls for service; dispatches police, fire and emergency medical units as necessary. The incumbent operates computer-aided dispatch system; makes inquiries and entries through local, state and federal information computer systems. The incumbent receives requests for information regarding vehicle registration, driving records and warrants, and provides pertinent data.

High school diploma or equivalent GED is required. Prior experience working as dispatcher is preferred. Possession of a valid Florida driver’s license is required. The ability to coordinate emergency responses during a crisis and maintain calm during situations is required. The ability to read and interpret maps and Global Position Systems (GPS) is required. The ability to communicate effectively and to listen and speak to people by radio and phone, often in some state of distress, is required. Must demonstrate excellent written and verbal communication skills. Must demonstrate proficiency utilizing Microsoft software packages. Must have the ability to work a flexible schedule including evenings, weekends and holidays and be on call 24/7.

Please visit [www.seminolepd.com](http://www.seminolepd.com) to complete the application.

**Executive Director**

**RiverCom 911**

**Wenatchee, WA**

RiverCom 911 in Wenatchee, WA, is seeking a highly-qualified individual with leadership experience for the position of Executive Director. RiverCom is a consolidated public safety answering point that processes 9-1-1 emergency and non-emergency calls for service in Chelan and Douglas counties. This is a full-time exempt position that reports directly to the RiverCom Administrative Board and is responsible for the executive management and oversight of all operations. The annual salary range for the position is $104,295 – $115,288 DOE plus a comprehensive benefit package. Employment is conditional on successfully passing a thorough background investigation and other pre-employment checks.

For more information about the position and application instructions go to the employment section of our website at [www.rivercom911.org](http://www.rivercom911.org). The closing date for applications is October 22, 2018 at 3:00 p.m.
1. What does AFC stand for?
   a. American Football Conference
   b. Automated Frequency Coordination
   c. Automatic Fire Control
   d. American Frequency Coordination

2. AFC was created in?
   a. 1924
   b. 1999
   c. 1986
   d. 1982

3. Duties of local coordinators include:
   a. Checking radios
   b. Coordinating frequency and reviewing interference complaints
   c. Attending FCC meetings
   d. Troubleshoot radio systems

4. Dispatchers must have a radio license.
   a. True
   b. False

5. All agencies using radios must have a license or authorization to use radio frequencies.
   a. True
   b. False

6. Applications or changes to licenses must use form ______ to complete their request.
   a. 219
   b. 601
   c. 622
   d. 214

7. Chapter members can become a Local Advisor.
   a. True
   b. False

8. The PSCC is a department of the Federal Communications Commission.
   a. True
   b. False

9. APCO AFC makes its own standards for coordination.
   a. True
   b. False

10. APCO AFC can only process member applications to the FCC.
    a. True
    b. False

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