Having spent almost 30 years in the emergency communications center (ECC), I have worked with CALEA accredited agencies, ISO (Insurance Services Office) one fire departments, and centers that have successfully completed the Agency Training Program Certification. I have worked in centers that have incorporated standards into standard operating procedures, job descriptions, performance appraisals, and emergency operating plans, and have aligned standards with equipment procurement, building design, and programs like NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children), Quality Assurance and TERT (Telecommunications Emergency Response Team). I was no stranger to standards, but what I did not know until serving as the APCO Standard’s Program Manager is the level of systematic research that goes into developing occupational training standards and standards that involve a particular process.
APCO is an ANSI (American National Standards Institute) accredited standards development organization. With approximately 25 published standards and another 12 standards currently in development or under revision, APCO assembles working groups consisting of approximately 15 volunteers from across the country to research, develop and write a standard on a particular topic. Groups that are tasked with writing a standard that involves a position or a process will base some of their research and development on the findings of the SDC (Standards Development Committee) Occupational Analysis Subcommittee.

Trained by APCO Past President Cheryl Greathouse and the team at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, the Occupational Analysis Subcommittee consists of 18 volunteer and staff facilitators that work collaboratively with high-performing volunteer practitioners from across the country to develop competency-based national standards. Modeled after DACUM (Developing a Curriculum), the team of facilitators follow a systematic, storyboarding process to determine specific content and criteria for the standards under development.

OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSIS

APCO currently has eight published standards for specific positions commonly found within the ECC. These standards include public safety telecommunicator, supervisor, manager/director, technician, certified training officer (CTO), quality assurance evaluator (QAE), instructor and training coordinator. All eight standards are located on the APCO Standards for Download webpage under the training category.

When it is determined that there is a need for a new standard or a revision of an existing standard involving an occupation, the team assembles a panel of approximately 6 to 10 high-performing, subject matter expert volunteers that participate in a one- to three-day workshop to analyze the specific position.

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In other words, if we are conducting an occupational analysis (OA) on a supervisor position, then a team of six supervisors from different ECCs are recruited to participate in the workshop.

At the end of the workshop, volunteers will develop an occupational definition and identify all of the traits, duties, tasks and knowledge relevant to the position. An occupational definition is a single sentence statement that describes in broad terms the job we do (who, what, how, and why). An example of an occupational definition for a director/manager position that was recently developed in Tempe, Arizona, would be: “Public Safety Emergency Communications Center Manager/Director is a professional administrator who supports, manages, and directs all aspects of a public safety communications center by effectively utilizing leadership skills, resources, and partnerships in order to protect, serve, and ensure the safety of the community and first responders.” You may find this definition to be similar to what you incorporate into a job description, as it is essentially a broader description of the job title.

Traits are an innate or learned ability or distinguishing quality that allows an individual to complete a job. Traits identified by a team of technicians participating in a workshop in Grundy County, Illinois, included characteristics such as responsible, proactive, safety-conscious, attentive to detail and innovative. Traits are a common thread throughout all of APCO’s occupational standards.

Duties are general areas of competence that successful workers in the occupation must perform on an ongoing basis. The group develops duties for a particular position using a verb-modifier-noun structure. For example, a duty applicable to a quality assurance evaluator (QAE) position identified by a team in Fairfax County, Virginia, includes “provide compliance oversight.”

Tasks are work activities that have definite beginnings and endings, are observable, consist of two or more definite steps and lead to a product, services, or decisions. The tasks associated with the QAE duty noted above, include: select reviewable incidents; evaluate telecommunications’ performance; document performance results; analyze performance results; identify performance trends; provide performance feedback; and formulate performance recommendations.

Knowledge is defined as an understanding and familiarity with facts and information. General knowledge that a certified training officer (CTO) needs include things such as agency chain of command, adult learning principles, agency written directives, jurisdiction and geography, agency protocols, and much more that can be located in the standard.

Once the group identifies the duties, skills, knowledge and traits of the position, the team will determine the criticality and frequency of tasks and will identify the tasks, knowledge and skills that should be incorporated into training programs for new hires and veteran workers.

At the completion of multiple OA workshops conducted across the country, the facilitators take all of the findings and aggregate the data into a final report for the working group assigned to write the standard. It is the working group’s responsibility to evaluate the findings and incorporate the information into the standard.

PROCESS ANALYSIS

A process analysis is very similar to the occupational analysis but it involves storyboarding a process with the same facilitated approach. Workshops consist of 6 to 10
high-performing incumbent panelists that use the process they are analyzing throughout the course of their job. For example, the team conducted an analysis on how to process a call for service with subject matter experts throughout the country who process calls for service and understand all of the steps and decisions involved.

The team tasked with a process analysis employs a flowchart or process flow diagram. The flowchart allows the team to visually illustrate a sequence of separate steps in sequential order. The team determines the sequence of actions, inputs and outputs, decisions to be made, and people who become involved at each step in the process.

The team begins by defining a process (e.g., processing a call for service). The team will determine the boundaries of the process, which is where and when the process should begin and end. Using the request for service process example, the process would begin with receiving the call for service and may end with terminating contact with the reporting party or providing assistance/information as needed or in the case of an actual dispatch, the process may end with recording the disposition code.

Once the process and start/finish boundaries have been identified, the team is tasked with brainstorming all of the major steps to be included in the process. A request for service may include steps such as greeting the reporting party, determining the exact location, identifying safety issues, determining the exact nature of the call, gathering and/or confirming appropriate information, providing pre-arrival instructions and others. The team will assemble the steps so they may conclude that, for example, determining the exact location is a higher priority than providing pre-arrival instructions. The group will arrange the steps in order and determine the flow of the steps.

Determining decision points that must be made during the process and activities to be conducted along the way is an important component of the process analysis. Important decision points of the request for service analysis would include steps such as determining:
1) Is the incident within the jurisdiction?
2) What is the priority of the incident?
3) Does the incident require a dispatch?
4) Does the telecommunicator need to maintain contact with the reporting party?

Finally, the team will determine the criticality of each of the activities and decision points throughout the process. At the completion of the process analysis workshops, the findings are aggregated and handed off to the working group that is responsible for developing and writing the standard.

From limiting risk by ensuring common language, protocols and interoperability to establishing benchmarks and best practices, standards can benefit public safety communications in many ways. APCO is always seeking subject matter experts who...
are interested in assisting with different standards development activities. Getting involved in the APCO standards development process is an excellent way to take your professional game to the next level by contributing to producing standards for public safety communications. To download APCO’s published standards or to sign up to participate in one of the standards development committees or working groups, please go to apcointl.org/standards or contact the standards program manager at apcostandards@apcointl.org.

Stacy Banker, RPL, ENP, is the standards program/ACS manager for APCO International. She works in the Communications Center and 9-1-1 Services Department as the staff liaison for the Standards Development Committee and oversees consulting services. Stacy has more than 30 years of experience in public safety communications. Her email is bankers@apcointl.org.

**Reference**

1. www.apcointl.org/standards/

### CDE EXAM #51393

1. An innate or learned ability or distinguishing quality that allows an individual to complete a job is the definition of:
   a. Trait
   b. Knowledge
   c. Task
   d. Duty

2. A general area of competence that successful workers in the occupation must perform on an ongoing basis is the definition of:
   a. Trait
   b. Knowledge
   c. Task
   d. Duty

3. Work activities that have definite beginnings and endings, are observable, consist of two or more definite steps, and lead to a product, services, or decisions is the definition of:
   a. Trait
   b. Knowledge
   c. Task
   d. Duty

4. An understanding and familiarity with facts and information is known as:
   a. Trait
   b. Knowledge
   c. Task
   d. Duty

5. In a process analysis for handling a call for service, greeting the reporting party may be considered a:
   a. Decision point
   b. Trait
   c. Step
   d. Process

6. A single sentence statement that describes in broad terms the job we do (who, what, how, and why) is called an occupational analysis.
   a. True
   b. False

7. When conducting a process analysis, the team begins with identifying the actual process and boundaries.
   a. True
   b. False

8. A flowchart is used during an occupational analysis.
   a. True
   b. False

9. APCO’s standard, Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Training Coordinator is an example of an occupational training standard.
   a. True
   b. False

10. When handling a call for service, determining whether or not a dispatch is necessary during the process analysis is considered a decision point.
    a. True
    b. False

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