



2015 REPORT

**PROFESSIONAL
COMMUNICATIONS HUMAN
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

ProCHRT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD/LETTER FROM THE CHAIR.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
PROCHRT HISTORY	4
PROCHRT MANIFESTO.....	5
WHERE WE ARE TODAY: SUB-COMMITTEES.....	6
RELEVANCE TO APCO COMMITTEES.....	11
NEW SURVEY FINDINGS.....	14
MOVING FORWARD/RECOMMENDATIONS	17
PROCHRT COMMITTEE MEMBERS	22
APPENDIX.....	23

FOREWORD

This report is the culmination of the work of the Pro-CHRT committee and its subcommittees and presents a “state of the profession” overview based on a recent survey that was sent to each chapter. This report is an aggregate result of that work designed to identify the key human resource issues that adversely affect our telecommunicator workforce.

Our telecommunicators across the country are the public safety hub and key in the overall first response system. Simply stated, without them, nothing happens. Fire trucks will not roll out the door, EMS units will not respond to emergencies and police units will remain stationary. They are the first voice heard during a call for help and assistance. They are responsible to triage the call, assign the proper resources and dispatch them in a timely manner, all while maintaining operational surveillance over a multitude of response units to ensure the public is served and that police officers, firefighters and EMS units make it back home safely at the end of shift.

Can you believe in 2015 that employees performing plumbing and electrical work in your home or office, mechanics repairing your automobile and the local nail specialist are all required to have more certification than the average public safety telecommunicator who is making life and death decisions daily? The list of states that require a minimum training standard are few, but there have been strides made in this area.

The telecommunicator’s job is more than a phone operator and radio dispatcher. These jobs are highly technical in nature and the job cannot be performed by just anybody. Training standards are necessary that not only address the technical, customer service, and multi-tasking job aspects, but also provides training on appropriate relief mechanisms available to them; such as critical incident stress debriefing.

The committee members are to be commended for their extraordinary work this year, not only with this report, but also in their outreach to chapters, expansion of the on-line toolbox and the outreach through social media. It was all done with one goal in mind, to promote the fact that the nation’s public safety telecommunicators are the true first of the first responders.

Sincerely,

William D. Carrow

William D. Carrow
Past-President & Chair Pro-CHRT 2014-2015

THE PROCHRT COMMITTEE ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR SUPPORT & CONTRIBUTIONS

The 2014-2015 APCO International Executive Committee:

John Wright, President
Brent Lee, First Vice President
Cheryl Greathouse, RPL, Second Vice President
Gigi Smith, Immediate Past President
Derek Poarch, Ex-Officio/Executive Director

APCO International Regional and CAC Representatives/Board of Directors

APCO International Executive Council Representatives

APCO ProCHRT Chapter-level Liaisons

APCO Chapters and membership who responded to the ProCHRT Survey

APCO Committees:

Awards Committee
CALEA Committee
Communications Center Standards Committee
Institute Advisory Committee
Leadership Development Committee
Member and Chapter Services Committee
National Joint TERT Initiative (NJTI)
Standards Development Committee

PROCHRT HISTORY

APCO's Professional Communications Human Resources Committee (ProCHRT) was established in 2009 to study and prepare reference materials relating to public safety communications *human resources*. The scope of work for the committee was established and included issues such as mandated telecommunicator training, state certification of telecommunicators, recognition as "First Responders", and retirement benefits comparable to other first responders.

While other public safety first responders and professions have mandatory minimum training and certification requirements, there is often no such requirements for telecommunicators. Our initial study found the following states reported to have public safety telecommunicator training requirements: CA, FL, GA, IA, ME, MD, MS, MO, MT, NM, NY, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WV, WY. The average number of training hours was reported as 32.

24 states (48%) reported having no EMD requirements, 18 (36%) reported having mandatory EMD requirements and 8 (16%) reported having voluntary EMD requirements.

Sample Required Training Hours:

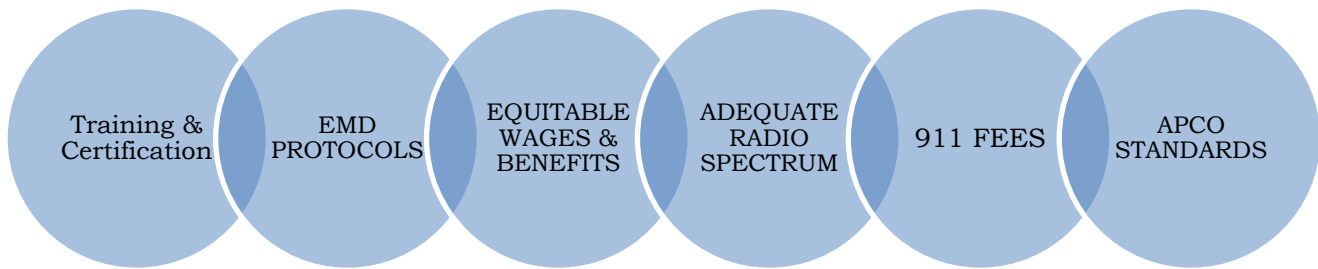
*Paramedic: 1,344
Law Enforcement Officer: 760
Corrections Officer: 532
Firefighter: 360*

Hairstylist: 1,200

(2008 FL APCO STUDY)

Although telecommunicators are the first "First Responder" handling the 94 million 9-1-1 calls made each year, our initial study found that no states legislatively recognized telecommunicators as first responders. Tasked with making instantaneous decisions and providing lifesaving advice and instruction to citizens in their most critical time of need, telecommunicators lack the professional recognition and equitable benefits of other public safety responders.





Our **Core Principles Manifesto**, which includes promoting the use of APCO's American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards, was published in 2010 and propositions that:

- Every state mandate and/or adopt standard criterion for 9-1-1 public safety call taker and dispatch training, using APCO's Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators (PST) as a baseline for certification and re-certification to maintain the highest level of knowledge, skill and ability.

*Telecommunicators
are the lifeline
between the
emergency call and
the response of the
public safety
community*



- Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) pre-arrival medical protocols are mandated and/or adopted by every state so that every citizen requesting an Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response is provided appropriate medical advice while EMS assistance is en route.
- 9-1-1 public safety communications personnel should be paid a fair and equitable wage and receive benefits commensurate with the mission critical life-saving nature of the job they perform each day, while working cohesively in providing services to and in support of Law Enforcement, Fire-Rescue and Emergency Medical Service providers.
- Adequate radio spectrum of all types (narrowband, broadband, etc.) is made available to public safety services to fulfill their mission and the needs and expectations of communities and citizens they serve and protect
- 9-1-1 fees/taxes collected from the public are used exclusively in support of 9-1-1 public safety communications and that funds collected are not diverted to other purposes.
- Training, operational and technical standards are utilized and that the public safety communications standards continue to be developed in support of the profession.

Our 2011 report reiterated our obstacles: although the voice of the public safety Telecommunicator is what a caller in an emergency hears first, there is a lack of standardized training for public safety communications professionals and a lack of recognition of these

professionals as integral emergency first responder partners. We also recognized the need for continuing education in order to maintain a consistent level of performance and to meet the ever-changing environment created by evolving technology. Public safety communications training standards can assist with establishing baseline criteria for hiring telecommunicators, as well as facilitating the training and improving retention.

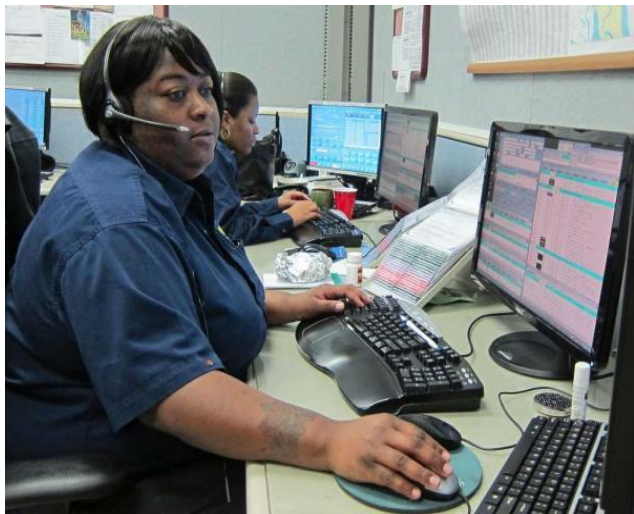
In 2012 we developed a strategic plan that included the APCO Government Relations Office (GRO) to serve as liaison between ProCHRT and the APCO Executive Committee. A “road map” was developed that included education, outreach and awareness to increase participation by APCO chapters and membership. The plan included providing information and garnering support for “positive awareness” of public safety communications human resources issues by working with the public, public safety entities/associations and legislators. Recognizing the need to utilize technology and social media, we developed and initiated a ProCHRT Facebook page and a Twitter account.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY: PROCHRT SUB-COMMITTEES

TOOLBOX SUBCOMMITTEE

Our toolbox is an online resource for everyone from frontline telecommunicators to upper-level managers, containing many valuable resources on the following topics:

- **Personnel & Human Factors:** The “Human Factor”, whether referring to hiring, retention or recognition, presents an extreme challenge to a highly skilled workforce with mission critical outcomes. The resources in this section of the ProCHRT Toolbox are designed to help you meet these challenges by identifying different ways to address staffing through recruitment/hiring practices, training, health impact awareness and mitigation, turnover and other human factors identified within public safety communications.



- **Training/Certification/Standards:** Pursuing mandatory minimum training standards and certification will help to achieve recognition that public safety communications has come of age and is identified as a mission critical core component of the nation’s public safety services. The benefit to the public and supported first responders can be recognized through higher levels of competency, ultimately helping provide a consistent and higher quality of service.

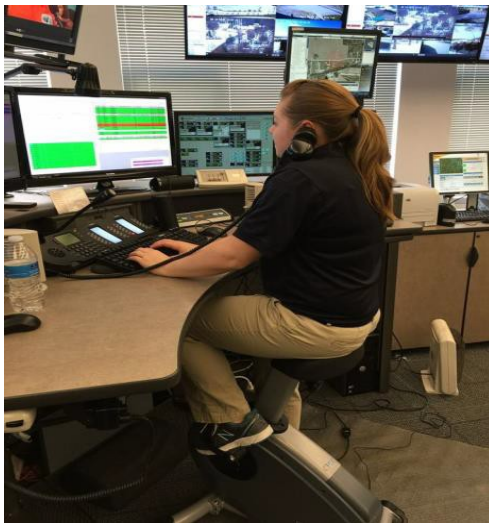
- **Public Education & Media Relations:** Seeking opportunities to celebrate our profession within our workplace as well as educating our communities will further our goals of achieving recognition for the critical role telecommunications plays in public safety. Enhancing relationships with our law enforcement, fire service and EMS partners will help reinforce the importance of telecommunicators as first responders. Building effective relationships with the media will help further educate the public and highlight the positive work that is accomplished every day. Reaching out through citizen academies or tours; connecting with and educating elected officials; and working with children in local schools are among the efforts that will help put a face to 9-1-1.



- **Legislation:** Legislation targeting mandatory training, certification, adequate funding and retirement benefits ensures that the profession of public safety communications meets defined standards and the high-level expectations of the public. Even though there are similarities, each state has a unique legislative process. The route can be daunting. Protocols must be followed and deadlines must be met. "Learning the ropes" takes time and effort. Establishing relationships and partnering with all disciplines of public safety strengthens our position and resolve. Each mandate requires some funding, and most cities, counties and states struggle with limited budgets. Clear purpose and justification are required to convince legislators to support legislation and allocate funds.



- Public Safety Communications Resources:** Studies support public safety communications as a profession requiring dedication and high standards of training. The reports and studies in this category contain a wealth of detail and documentation to support initiatives to further the goals for an agency, chapter or individual. Articles and press releases identify the need and value of highly trained and skilled professionals in this field. Policy examples are posted to help meet the challenges of constantly advancing technology and new challenges to the field. Testaments of those performing this work every day corroborate the conclusions of the studies, reports and articles which allows for comparisons to other strictly regulated careers such as Air Traffic Controllers who are also held to a high standard of competency.



- Health & Wellness:** Public Safety Telecommunicators are devoted to assisting others every day, whether it be to help guide them through personal crisis, deal with life threatening situations, answer questions or assure them help is available. It is essential that telecommunicators take good care of themselves so they are able to better handle challenges and mitigate the impact of shift work and stress. Studies show negative health effects from shift work, stress, lack of exercise or poor eating habits. The resources in this section of the Toolbox are designed to help individuals recognize signs of possible trouble, and to be proactive about building positive habits and striving for good mental and physical health. These resources may be adopted by, or used to motivate a shift or

agency to challenge themselves to work toward optimum health as a group. Included in the Toolbox is a series of monthly articles, “Healthy Living Designed for Telecommunicators”.

New Additions: The APCO Institute recently added a ProCHRT module to the Registered Public Safety Leader (RPL) certificate program to familiarize leaders with our ProCHRT committee work and as familiarization with the resources in the Toolbox. Additionally, we have created a scavenger hunt and an interactive game show for use at local meetings, conferences, and Association level events, to educate chapters, agencies and individuals about ProCHRT and the available resources.



SOCIAL MEDIA SUBCOMMITTEE

The APCO ProCHRT Committee recognized that social media would be an important tool to help spread the message of positive 9-1-1 interactions and experiences. To take advantage of this resource, a Social Media Sub-Committee was created to manage these online activities and the outreach of the APCO ProCHRT National, and individual chapter committees. Sub-Committee members created both a Facebook page and a Twitter “handle”. Since establishing the Face book page (www.facebook.com/APCOProCHRT), we have acquired more than 370 “likes” and the number of people being reached increases weekly. The @ProCHRT_APCO Twitter handle has successfully acquired over 580 “Followers”, and “Tweeted” more than 2,900 messages about telecommunicators and the public safety communications industry. We found an enormous increase in Twitter followers during the 2014 APCO Conference in New Orleans, attributed to the information provided about conference activities and attendees.



Our outreach efforts have included online contests to increase membership; a 9-1-1 Communications Center logo gallery; and, health and wellness tips to give our followers ideas to help them stay physically and mentally fit during shifts and while working at their dispatch consoles. Through social media, we continuously post positive 9-1-1 experiences that are mined from news media reports and other referrals. Postings include recognition of telecommunicators that have received awards, handled calls with successful outcomes that are directly related to the telecommunicator’s involvement, and various other positive news stories. Our information provides our followers access to the human resource factors of Public Safety Communications by highlighting the skills and training required to be successful.

Public Safety professionals are encouraged to join us on our social media sites and we welcome information and media stories about public safety telecommunicators, as well as agency and APCO Chapter happenings.



CHAPTER RESOURCE GROUP

In accordance with our strategic plan for education, outreach, and awareness of the profession and the challenges we face, we have encouraged all chapters or states to establish a Chapter ProCHRT committee. Because change begins at the local level, these committees become advocates at the state and chapter level, ultimately influencing change on a larger scale. We have formed a “Chapter Resource Group”, with the vision and efforts that mirror APCO ProCHRT:

- Gather local (state, county, individual PSAP) information and data
- Prepare reference and educational materials
- Monitor legislation at the State level
- Educate the public, public safety entities/associations, administrators, and legislators
- Garner support by promoting ProCHRT International
- Promote industry standards, training and certification
- Take advantage of technology such as internet resources and social media for research and communication with target audiences

Each member of the APCO International ProCHRT Committee is assigned as a liaison to several chapters. Liaisons are responsible for communicating with Chapter Presidents to encourage formation of Chapter committees; mentor members of existing Chapter ProCHRT Committees; act as liaison between the Chapter committee and the APCO International ProCHRT Committee. Nearly half of our APCO International Chapters have already formed a Chapter ProCHRT committee and others are in the planning process. Chapter Resource Group members teleconference quarterly to discuss training, certification, public education, legislation, recognition, health/well-being, retirement issues and other updates. Chapter Resource Group members, along with other Chapter members assisted with gathering data for this 2015



ProCHRT report. Chapters that have not yet formed a committee are encouraged to do so. ProCHRT committee members assist by helping outline the Chapter committee purpose, develop goals and objectives, and become a member of the Chapter Resource Group. Choreographing Local, State and Federal efforts to provide adequate resources and recognition for public safety personnel, while promoting the profession of Public-Safety Communications begin at the local level. Working together, we can achieve our shared objectives.

REPORT SUBCOMMITTEE

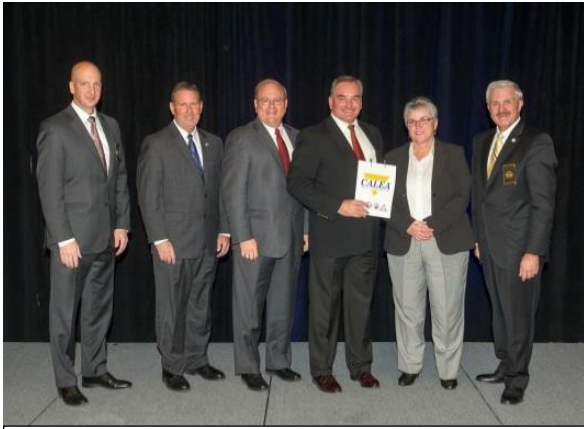
In order to gather pertinent public safety communications information, this subcommittee is charged with developing survey questions for distribution to APCO Chapters and Committees to obtain updated/current data reflecting the ProCHRT objectives; reviewing and compiling the data for use in the annual report, and; drafting a report for review and approval by the full ProCHRT Committee.

PROCHRT RELEVANCE TO OTHER APCO COMMITTEES

APCO INSTITUTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE: The scope of this committee is to advise the Institute in fulfillment of its mission of providing training and support to the public safety communications community and to solicit, review and award APCO scholarships. 2014-2015 goals include: assisting the Institute in evaluating impact, time frames and improved communication process to members regarding changes implemented by the Institute; assist with updating the EMD Guidecards through review and feedback; and, effectively review and consider scholarship applications to promote continuing training opportunities for members at various levels of experience. Committee focus is on the application, evaluation and distribution of scholarship monies to promote the professional development of APCO members at all levels. The committee's process ensures scholarships are awarded to frontline telecommunicators, as well as mid- and upper-level management who will fully engage in training opportunities and in turn share the knowledge gained with others. Past, present, and future efforts are to assist the Institute in promoting excellent products that ensure the professional development of Public Safety communications employees, elevating the profession. The vital role and goals of the Advisory Committee align and support the ProCHRT manifesto.



AWARDS COMMITTEE: The mission of this committee is to foster a high standard of service by promoting the recognition of public safety communications professionals through solicitation of nominations; reviewing nominees, and; making recommendations to the Executive Committee for recognition of outstanding achievements. Award categories include: Public Safety Dispatcher, Trainer, Radio Frequency Technologist, Information Technologist, Director, Line Supervisor, Team Award, and Technology Leadership. Awards are presented annually during the APCO International conference.



CALEA Commission/Staff & APCO CALEA Committee Chair

CALEA COMMITTEE: This committee strives to ensure that PSAPs meet or exceed CALEA standards by assisting with development and modifications, and by monitoring current trends within our industry. The committee is comprised of SMEs from across the country from varying sized PSAPs. Members are accreditation managers, assessors and a CALEA Communications Commissioner who is part of the CALEA review board. An entire chapter of the CALEA Communications Accreditation standards is comprised of training requirements including new hire training, Communications

Training Officers (CTO's) training, refresher training for all employees, and the establishment of a Training Committee within the agency to serve as liaison to the training function. The standards also include the use of EMD protocols, technical, and other operational protocols. These standards are reviewed by committee members through feedback from agency accreditation managers and the assessors that conduct on-site reviews. CALEA Commissioners and staff also request recommendations and/or clarifications from the CALEA Committee. Committee members serve as Adjunct Instructors for the APCO Institute on-line CALEA Communications Accreditation Manager course.

COMMUNICATIONS CENTER STANDARDS COMMITTEE: This committee is responsible for creating public safety communications training standards or recommended best practices for the APCO/ANS process. Using an Occupational Analysis or Process Analysis Profile Charts which are the result of aggregated analyses conducted around the country, information is obtained upon which standards, recommended practices, or processes are created. Information from these processes can be used by agencies to create documents such as relevant and specific job duties; essential functions documents; performance appraisal or evaluation documents; and agency training curricula. Completed APCO/ANSI standards are published and available for download on the APCO website. Believing that all of the committee's work involving minimum training standard or recommended best practices coincides to the ProCHRT manifesto, future committee projects such as best hiring practices is currently considered as well.



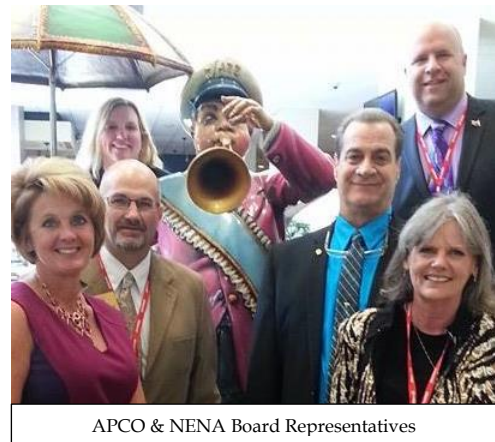
Comm Center Standards Committee members reviewing analysis results.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: The committee is comprised of 3 members of the Credentials Committee (Past Presidents), 2 members of the Board of Directors and 2 Executive Council Representatives. The purpose of the committee is to identify challenges (along with possible solutions) for recruiting candidates for leadership roles within the Association. Ideas include a leadership development process that continues to help build a strong membership base while emphasizing increased mentoring and training at the chapter and national levels. Creating an avenue to successfully mentor, develop and recruit well-qualified leaders of tomorrow correlates well to the ProCHRT goal of enhancing the public safety communications profession.

MEMBER AND CHAPTER SERVICES COMMITTEE: The purpose of this committee is to assist Chapter leadership and APCO members in receiving the full benefits of APCO International. A monthly newsletter provides details of training events and courses presented by the APCO Institute, as well as Chapter-related events.

NATIONAL JOINT TERT INITIATIVE (NJTI):

In partnership, APCO International and the National Emergency Number Association are dedicated to the development of a nationally recognized program for telecommunicator mutual aid response in the aftermath of disasters. This includes providing education on the deployments of the Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT) programs and taking a leadership role in assisting governmental agencies in the development of TERT programs at the regional, state, and local levels. Goals of this committee include generating interest and promoting participation in states that do not currently have TERT teams, continuing to develop, improve and expand upon the use of social media applications to spread the word about this initiative, research the use of webinars as a nationwide NJTI information sharing tool and promote the use of TERT resources in tactical dispatch settings.



APCO & NENA Board Representatives

STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: The scope of the Standards Development Committee is to oversee the APCO National Standards (ANS) process to ensure compliance with the Essential Requirements of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The committee is tasked with establishing national industry standards in three major areas: Training, Operations, and Technical. These national standards assist in providing consistent public safety communications services to the public, as well outlining core competencies and recommended training for public safety communications professionals. Use of these standards also assists public safety agencies in enhancing training programs and creating employee job descriptions and professional development opportunities. Committee workgroups assist in the development of standards and utilize subject matter experts from across the country from diverse backgrounds, defined as “Users”, “Producers”, and “General Interest” in order to provide consensus. All of the committee members are trained in the ANSI process. APCO is audited by ANSI every five years to ensure compliance with ANSI requirements.

NEW SURVEY – CHAPTER/STATE FINDINGS

A survey was conducted to update the findings identified in our early reports. Information gathered includes state legislated training, voluntary training, state legislated telecommunicator certification, voluntary certification, state legislated continuing education, state retirement benefits, state and local hiring requirements and employee retention efforts. Thirty three states and the District of Columbia responded to the survey. An attached appendix provides more detailed response information.



LEGISLATED TRAINING

Five states reported that there are **NO** legislated training requirements.

The following reported **MANDATORY** training requirements:

STATE	TRAINING REQUIREMENT
Arkansas	Effective April 2015! (training hours to be determined)
Connecticut	6-step process; online, 3-day state training program; ICS & EMD
District of Columbia	90 days
Delaware	EMD only
Florida	232 hours
Georgia	40 hours
Iowa	40 hours within 1 year of hire
Kansas	80 hours
Maryland	No minimum number of hours
Michigan	80 hours within 2 years of hire
Mississippi	40 hours plus 8-hour ride along/each discipline
Missouri	8 hours/single discipline; 16 hours for 911 centers; 40 hours/consolidated center
Montana	40 hours
New York	200 hours
Oregon	80 hours
Pennsylvania	Based on minimum standards
South Dakota	80 hours
Texas	40 hours and 24 hours Crisis Communications and 4 hours TDD
Virginia	40 hours
Wyoming	60 hours

VOLUNTARY TRAINING

The following states reported **VOLUNTARY** training:

- Colorado: In development
 - Delaware: varies by agency
 - Indiana: In development
- New Hampshire
 - Ohio
 - Washington: 40 hours

LEGISLATED TELECOMMUNICATOR CERTIFICATION

The following reported **MANDATORY** certification:

- Connecticut
 - District of Columbia (EMD only)
 - Florida
 - Georgia
 - Iowa
 - Kansas
 - Mississippi
 - Montana
- Oregon
 - Pennsylvania
 - South Dakota
 - Texas (law enforcement only service providers)
 - Virginia
 - Wyoming

VOLUNTARY TELECOMMUNICATOR CERTIFICATION

The following states reported **VOLUNTARY** certification:

- Arkansas
 - Delaware
 - Maryland
 - New Hampshire
- Ohio
 - Utah
 - Vermont (call-takers only)
 - Washington

LEGISLATED CONTINUING EDUCATION

Twenty responses indicated there are **NO** legislated continuing education requirements.

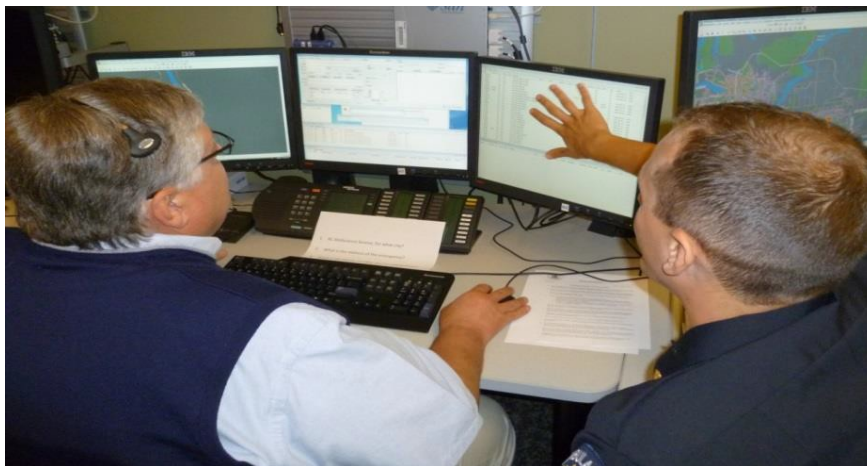
The following reported **LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**:

STATE	NUMBER OF HOURS
Connecticut	No legislated hours but active employment required
District of Columbia	40 hours
Florida	20 hours every 2 years
Iowa	8 hours per year
Kansas	Will require 24 hour per year, effective December 2015
Maryland	No established number of hours
Michigan	24 hours every 2 years

Mississippi	16 hours every 2 years
Missouri	24 hours every 3 years
Montana	Not legislated, but POST requires 20 hours every 2 years
New York	21 hours
Oregon	12 hours plus 4 hours EMD
Texas	20 hours every 2 years
Utah	20 hours
Wyoming	20 hours every 2 years

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Sixteen states reported retirement benefits for telecommunicators are different from other first responders; four states have benefits similar to other first responders; six vary by agency and Wyoming reported that telecommunicators are included in the Wyoming Retirement System under Law Enforcement. (See appendix for additional, more specific retirement data).



HIRING REQUIREMENTS

Hiring requirements were reported as general in nature, usually established by the hiring agency, and include high school diploma or equivalent, and no felony record. States with mandated training and certification require compliance with those legislated components.

RETENTION EFFORTS

Thirty one states reported no specific retention practices or unknown because they are conducted at the local PSAP level. Four reported using APCO Project RETAINS. Florida and Montana report utilizing retirement legislation as a retention effort. Wisconsin reports review of compensation packages including CISM/PTSD training/treatment, employee empowerment/engagement activities.

MOVING FORWARD: METHODS TO ENRICH OUR PROFESSION WHILE REDUCING TURNOVER

❖ UTILIZING APCO STANDARDS

Identifying minimum training requirements, core competencies, and a consistent foundation for the knowledge, skills and abilities relating to specific public safety communications functions, APCO standards also provide guidelines and methodologies for various technical applications and processes utilized in the public safety communications center. APCO standards are created by public safety communications subject matter experts and are accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

❖ ACHIEVING APCO TRAINING PROGRAM CERTIFICATION

Training for Public Safety Telecommunicators (initial and continuing) is exceedingly important as they provide essential services to the public in an ever-expanding and rapidly changing public safety environment. Public Safety Communications Centers must provide the best training possible. Many centers have developed their own basic training materials and processes while many others receive training from the APCO Institute. The APCO Agency Training Program Certification (P33) is a formal mechanism for public safety agencies to certify their training programs as meeting or exceeding the APCO ANS 3.103.1-2010: Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators standard. There are currently **63** APCO certified communications centers!

❖ ACHIEVING NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

Partnering with APCO, the *Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies* (CALEA) Communications Accreditation provides a communications center with a process to systemically review and internally assess its operations and procedures. The standards upon which the Public Safety Communications Accreditation Program is based reflect the current thinking and experience of public safety communications executives and accreditation experts and facilitates an agency's pursuit of professional excellence.



APCO ANSI Standards

Operational

Best Practices for Use of Social Media in Public Safety Communications

Channel Nomenclature for the Public Safety Interoperability Channels

Public Safety Telecommunicator Response to Calls of Missing, Abducted and Sexually Exploited Children

Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT) Deployment

Technical

Alarm Monitoring Company to PSAP CAD Automated Secure Alarm Protocol (ASAP)

Common Incident Disposition Codes for Data Exchange

Public Safety Communications Common Incident Types for Data Exchange

Training

Core Competencies & Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications:

Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST)

Certified Training Officer (CTO)

Training Coordinator

Instructor

Quality Assurance Evaluator

Supervisor

Director/Manager

❖ RECOGNIZING & ADDRESSING EMPLOYEE HEALTH RISKS

Like other first responders, telecommunicators frequently handle calls involving serious injury, life-threatening situations, and catastrophic events, including death. Telecommunicators are required to rapidly and accurately multi-task answering multiple telephone lines while utilizing CAD, radios, protocols, maps, and evolving “NextGen” technology.



Photo Courtesy of DanSun Photo Art www.dansunphotos.com

In addition to the stress-inducing calls that telecommunicators process, shift work, inadequate and disruptive sleep patterns, sitting for long periods of time, and poor nutritional habits can lead to physical, mental and emotional health problems. Lack of proper rest, minimal exercise and increased stress hormones can lead to high blood pressure and cardio vascular disease, weight gain, obesity, diabetes and even cancer. It is not uncommon for telecommunicators to suffer from physical conditions such as headaches, back and neck pain, eye strain, and gastrointestinal problems. Incidents involving children, mass casualties, natural disasters and injury/death of a colleague are especially traumatic for the telecommunicator. Exposure to these types of incidents becomes even more traumatic when accompanied by graphic photos and video streams (NG 9-1-1). Frequent exposure to trauma, even via telephone and radio, can lead to irritability, anxiety, depression, traumatic incident stress, and if not properly treated, can evolve into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). For the well-being of our employees, we must recognize and mitigate stress and health-related problems. These health-related problems can also negatively affect the employer/agency. Untreated physical, emotional and mental health matters can lead to employee conflict, low-morale, bullying, and high turnover rates. Encouraging exercise, proper diet, and adequate breaks, while making available appropriate physical, emotional and mental health programs is essential for productive and healthy telecommunicators. Many studies and examples of ways to improve health are located in the ProCHRT Toolbox.

❖ DEVELOPING & UTILIZING BEST HIRING PRACTICES

Job-related pre-hire qualifications and hiring practices are essential for employing and retaining quality personnel. Establishing valid, task-specific minimum requirements and appropriate testing procedures helps to ensure quality staffing and excellent customer service.

❖ MANDATING TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Public expectation of professional emergency responders includes mandated training and certification – this holds true for the public safety telecommunicator as well. Standardized training ensures worker competency, as well as employee satisfaction. If training and certification is not mandated at a state level, individual agencies should establish such programs.



Based on an occupational analysis of high-performing incumbent public safety communications workers, APCO Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicator outlines agency responsibilities, including training program administration, and essential telecommunicator knowledge and skill requirements. By adopting this training standard, the agency establishes a detailed training curriculum, defines performance expectations, maintains training records and ensures professional competence.

❖ CONDUCTING QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS AND PROVIDING CONTINUING EDUCATION



Many agencies provide initial training for new Public Safety Telecommunicators - in the classroom, on-the-job, or both. Often overlooked are frequent performance reviews and continuing education. Obstacles may include budgetary constraints, inadequate staffing, or a lack of understanding the importance. Quality assurance reviews identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide constructive feedback to the employee. Reviews may identify needs for additional training, technological improvements, or changes to policy/procedure.

Continuing education can improve existing skills and knowledge; introduce telecommunicators to current and new operational and technical issues in public safety; and, offer opportunities for career advancement. All of these lead to improved service to the public and the first responder community, as well as increased employee productivity and morale. Affordable continuing education is available through the APCO Institute utilizing articles in the *Public Safety Communications* magazine, *Illuminations* on-line monthly training, Web Seminars and Video Training Series.

❖ RECOGNIZING TELECOMMUNICATORS AS “FIRST OF THE FIRST RESPONDERS”

As agencies provide public safety services to their citizens, there are many aspects to this delivery. To the average individual, police, fire and EMS services are the obvious ones involved in providing these services, primarily because these are the faces they see when they call for help. While they see police cars, fire trucks and ambulances on a regular basis, they do not see the actual people that they call. This is the vital link in the service provision process - a link so important that if it were not there, public safety services would be crippled. This link of course is the **public safety communications** element.

Communications has emerged over the last few decades from what would be a support service to police, fire and EMS, to its own public safety discipline. The communications center is providing very specific, highly technical and critical services. It is no longer an administrative person sitting at a desk, filling out a log and occasionally talking on a radio. Highly trained individuals are now not only receiving calls and relaying information, but they also provide emergency medical instructions to callers, providing lifesaving medical care long before the paramedics arrive. Instructions are provided for CPR, delivering babies, stopping bleeding, and keeping patients comfortable until help arrives. They are instructing callers on actions to take prior to police services arriving such as what to do if there's an intruder in the house, keeping parties separated during domestic disturbances, and obtaining detailed, pertinent information on in-progress calls; information that is invaluable to responders. Information gathered and instructions given on fire related calls not only affect the safety of callers but responders as well. Instructions to exit burning buildings or to stay away from dangerous situations have saved lives. Incident information given to responders of all disciplines has a direct impact on their safety - without very specific and highly detailed training and then execution of this knowledge, responders would be vulnerable.



As we break down the holistic process of public safety services, it is evident that without the communications element, it simply would not work. When we look at the duties, tasks and the role that communications plays in the process, it is clear that communications personnel are...



**...THE FIRST OF
THE FIRST
RESPONDERS!**



❖ ATTAINING EQUITABLE RETIREMENT BENEFITS

The 2005 APCO Project RETAINS (Responsive Efforts to Address Integral Needs in Staffing) study found that **97% of public safety communications personnel WOULD NOT work in the profession long enough to retire**. Traditionally, retirement benefits, including the number of work years required for communications personnel, are not as favorable as the benefits afforded to other public safety professionals. Classification as “first responder” can lead to comparable years of service requirements and equitable retirement benefits for telecommunicators.

❖ BESTOWING EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION



Recognizing and expressing appreciation for outstanding achievement may include agency “employee-of-the-year” awards, or recognition at the APCO Chapter and/or International level. Employees demonstrating high levels of personal and professional accomplishment, or outstanding performance, should be acknowledged. APCO International award categories include Telecommunicator of the Year, Communications Center Director of the Year, Line Supervisor of the Year, Radio Frequency Technologist of the Year, Information Technologist of the Year, Trainer of the Year and Team of the Year.

Employee appreciation should be demonstrated each year during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. This celebration provides the opportunity to thank and recognize public safety communications personnel as the vital link between the community and other public safety professionals.



PROCHRT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Representing various sized agencies, our committee members represent diverse components of public safety communications from across the U.S.:

Bill Carrow
ProCHRT Chair
Deputy Director of
Communications
Delaware Dept. of
Public Safety & Homeland
Security

Susan Bomstad,
ProCHRT Vice-Chair
President, Montana APCO

Michele Abbott, RPL
Director of EM
& E911 Services
Hutchinson, KS
Police Department

Carol Adams, RPL
Director of Emergency
Communications
Stafford County, VA
Sheriff's Office

Celeste Baldino, RPL
Communications
Supervisor
Charlottesville, VA

Lynn Bowler
Support Services Manager
Elk Grove, CA Police
Department

Yvonne Carslay
Training Manager
Valley Communications
Kent, WA

Jeff Cohen
Government Relations Office
APCO International

Charles Cullen
Technical Services
Director
Palo Alto, CA
Police Department

Stephanie Fritts, RPL
Director E911 &
Emergency Management
Pacific County, WA

Debbie Gailbreath, RPL
Comm Accreditation Mgr
Sarasota County, FL
Sheriff's Office

Jonathan Goldman, RPL
Director of
Communications
Derry, NH, Fire
Department

Cellinda Howard
Communications
Supervisor
Norman, OK

Teresa Hudson
Communications
Supervisor
Springdale, AR
Police Department

Matt Stillwell, RPL, ENP
Director of Public Safety
Communications &
Emergency Management
City of Edmond, OK

Mark Reddish
Government Relations Office
APCO International

Jessica Trimble, RPL
Training Coordinator
Unified Emergency
Communications Center
Anderson County, SC

Jason Kern
APCO Committee
Group Leader

Appendix

MANDATORY TELECOMMUNICATOR CERTIFICATION – CERTIFYING ENTITIES

AR – Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETa)
Connecticut – Department of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (DSET)
District of Columbia – EMD – Priority Dispatch
Florida – FL Department of Health
Georgia – GA Peace Officers Training Standards (POST)
Iowa – Iowa Law Enforcement Academy
Mississippi – Board of Emergency Telecommunicator Standards & Training
Montana – POST
Oregon – Department of Public Safety Standards and Training
Pennsylvania – PEMA
South Dakota – SD Law Enforcement Training
Texas – Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
Vermont – (Entity not identified)
Virginia – VA Department of Criminal Justice Services
Wyoming – WY POST

VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS:

California – 120 hours of basic training and 24 hours of Continued Professional Training every 2 years through POST. 24 hours of EMD instruction plus 24 hours continuing training every 2 years.
Ohio – OH Department of Education
Utah – UT POST
Washington – 40 hours of calltaker training and 40 hours of dispatcher training, with 24 hours of continuing education annually. Training provided via the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS EXPLAINED IN THE SURVEY:

Alaska- 30 years for telecommunicator, 20 years for Law Enforcement and Firefighters.

Arizona- While at one time there was legislation that allowed dispatchers to be included in the same 25 year retirement system as correctional officers (CORP-which is not the 20 year public safety retirement), it required the agency/jurisdictional community to opt-in to the program. Not all agencies participated in the dispatcher retirement program. Since then, the legislation has been rescinded and dispatchers fall within whatever retirement program is available at the agency. For the dispatchers that were enrolled in the CORP, they will remain there as long as they hold that position.

Arkansas- Does not have a state wide system.

California – No statewide system. Dispatchers may enroll in PERS or a city/county retirement system. They are not considered public safety. Minimum retirement age is 55 vs 50 for patrol officers.

Connecticut- One example is the rule of 80, years of service plus your age must equal 80 or you reach age 65. You receive 2% of highest wages for each year of service work plus 50% co-pay of insurance.

Delaware- Each center is different as they are staffed by the local agency.

District of Columbia- Whatever you put in is what you have and after 5 years of service you are eligible.

Florida- Retirement benefits differ from agency to agency. Some agencies are in the State of Florida Retirement System (FRS) and other agencies have private pension plans and/or agency sponsored 401k.

Georgia- No statewide system.

Indiana- State has PERF (Public Employee Retirement Plan) that is available to all persons working for a government entity. Dispatchers not included in police/fire retirement groups.

Iowa- State Retirement Plan- officers and deputies are different class than dispatchers

Kansas- Police and Fire contributions and benefits differ from telecommunications in the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System.

Maryland- Retirement benefits are the responsibility of county government managing PSAP.

Mississippi- PERS is a state retirement system which the city, state and county employees are part of. This includes teachers, city and county workers in any field. The police and fire are a part of it also.

Missouri- Many of the state benefits for first responders do not cross to call takers and dispatchers. It is legislated in that way in some cases.

Montana- Dispatchers are members of the Public Employee Retirement System, allowed to retire with full benefits at 30 years, or take an early retirement at 25 years with reduced benefits. Law Enforcement and Fire personnel have the opportunity to retire at 20 years with full retirement benefits. This includes the Sheriffs Retirement System (SRS), Municipal Police Officers Retirement System (MPORS), Game Wardens and Peace Officers Retirement System (GPORS) and Firefighters Unified Retirement System (FURS).

Nebraska- Depends on location and/or entity.

Nevada- Dispatchers retire at 30 years where officers retire at 25 years and the percentages are lower.

New Hampshire- 30 years as opposed to 20 years for Law/Fire/EMS.

New York - Telecommunicators are not considered first responders. More years of service are required.

Ohio Public Employee Retirement System requires 32 years of service. Other local retirement systems (Cincinnati and Cleveland) vary.

Oklahoma- none

Oregon- Telecommunicators can retire early at 25 years, but at a reduced benefit from police and firefighters with similar tenure.

Pennsylvania- Depends on county retirement benefits for each PSAP.

South Dakota- For an early retirement, telecommunicators must attain 85 points by combining their age and years of service. First responders have the rule of 75 and receive a higher percentage when they retire.

South Dakota- Less retirement benefits and not eligible to retire as early as law enforcement/fire, etc.

Texas- County or City retirement

Utah- If hired before July 1, 2011 (Tier 1): 30 years of service for full pension, with 2% per year of service calculated from highest 3 salary years. If hired after July 1, 2011 (Tier 2): 35 years of service for full pension, with 1.5% per year of service calculated from highest 5 salary years. Tier 2 has a 401k option.

Vermont- It varies depending on the organization.

Virginia- Telecommunicators are not included in the Virginia LEO retirement or the Fire retirement program. The retirement is defined by each local political body, and only Fairfax, VA has a retirement program similar to their public safety agencies. Most telecommunicators fall under the general local plan.

Washington- For telecommunicators age 65 years; for law enforcement or firefighters it is age 53. <http://www.drs.wa.gov/about/pensions/systemplans.htm>

Wisconsin- Same plan for the depositing of the state run pension. Employee Trust Funds, different age is recognized for retirement of field vs. telecommunicator. (Protective services vs. non-protective services). Fire can opt out of Social Security Contribution. Most municipalities participate in the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), but not all. Plan details available at http://etf.wi.gov/members/benefits_wrs.htm

Wyoming- 20 years