

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The introduction of broadband technologies will be an evolution, not a discrete change for PSAPs. It is APCO's intent that this report serves as a starting point to guide additional efforts to serve the public safety communications community at all levels and in all sectors.

ESSENTIAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While every finding and recommendation in this report warrants consideration, the following require the most immediate attention.

Appropriate Recognition for Public Safety Telecommunicators

Public safety communications professionals are and will remain essential to emergency operations. As communication methods evolve, the skill and professionalism of PSTs will remain constant, serving as a lifeline for members of the public and first responders. Garnering financial support and attention from industry and decision-makers in government, whether for upgrading technology or supporting the workforce, depends on understanding the emergency communications ecosystem. Accordingly, PSTs deserve appropriate respect and recognition at the federal, state, and local levels.

Building a Shared Vision for the Future of Emergency Communications

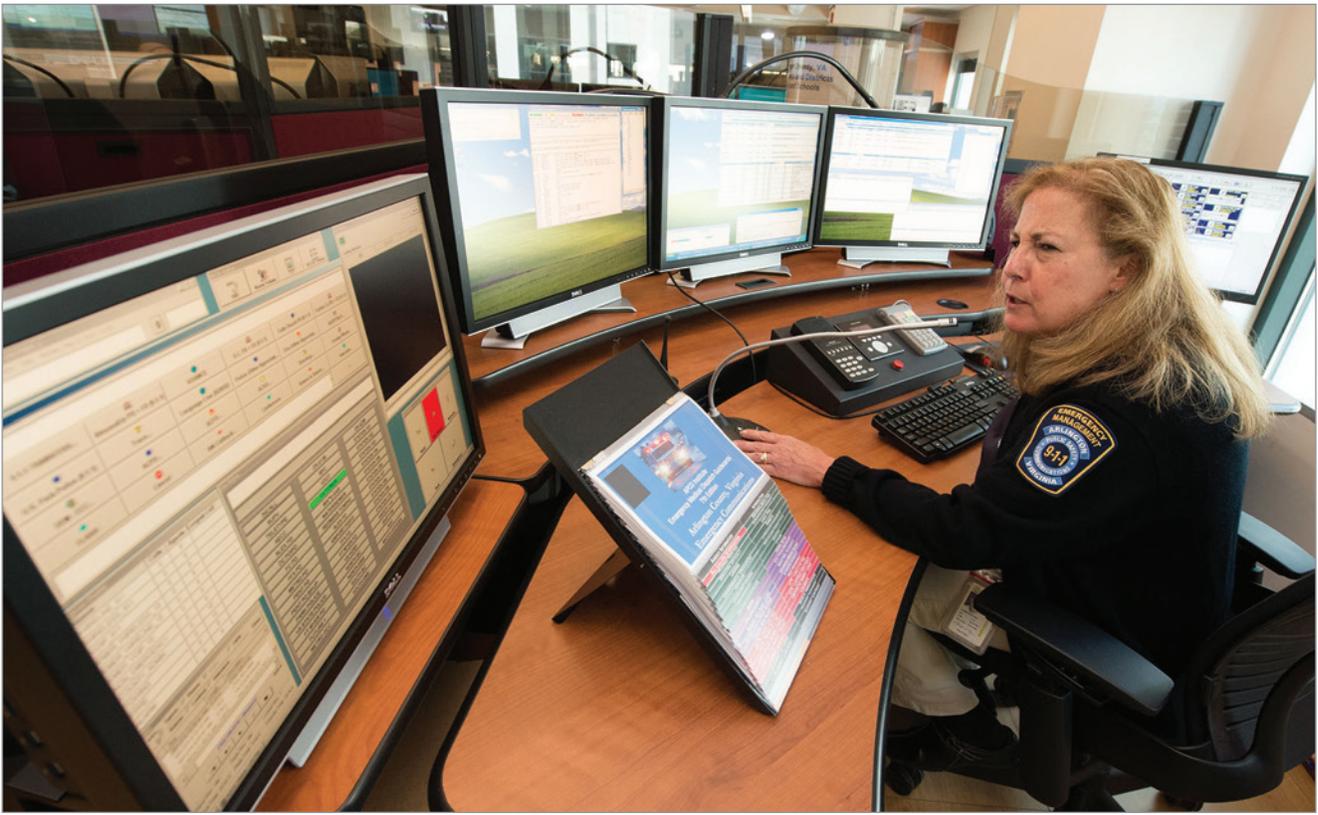
With the transition to broadband technologies, PSAPs have a chance to break the cycle of proprietary, one-off solutions for public safety. The time has come to think outside of the box and reject the assumption that public safety products require costly enhancements to achieve

interoperability. With CPE, network elements, RMS, GIS, CAD, mobile apps – every element of public safety communications – the community must demand interoperability as a baseline expectation. The vision must be end-to-end, meaning from the initial report of an emergency, whether from a member of the public making a voice call or another input, to PSTs and onto first responders in the field, every element of the ecosystem must be interoperable with other components.

A common definition of NG9-1-1 is essential for achieving this vision: “NG9-1-1 is a secure, nationwide, interoperable, standards-based, all-IP emergency communications infrastructure enabling end-to-end transmission of all types of data, including voice and multimedia communications from the public to an Emergency Communications Center.”

Emergency Communications Centers as the “Nerve Centers” of Emergency Response

Rather than serving a primary purpose of receiving and processing 9-1-1 calls, PSAPs will quickly morph into fully integrated command, control, and communications centers with capabilities that include basic intelligence collection and monitoring, 9-1-1 multimedia traffic processing, full scale dispatch, and incident command capabilities. Communications centers will increasingly be the “nerve centers” of public safety operations. “Public Safety Answering Point” fails to convey the important operational role. Accordingly, stakeholders should adopt the term “Emergency Communications Center.”



Interoperability and Standards

Standards are critical, and the public safety community needs mechanisms to ensure that NG9-1-1 systems meet the interoperability goals described in the use cases above, both when they are deployed and on an ongoing basis. APCO recommends that RFP language and federal grant programs call for the use of widely deployed commercial standards to ensure seamless interoperability among and between PSAPs, ESInets, states, jurisdictions, originating networks, and the NPSBN. Any standards used in addition to widely deployed commercial standards should be approved through organizations such as ANSI that accredit the procedures of standards development organizations to ensure openness, balance, consensus, and due process.

The Need for Federal Action to Support 9-1-1

Congress should establish a substantial grant program to modernize 9-1-1 services across the country as a national imperative. This would help ensure that all PSAPs have the resources needed to upgrade in approximately the same timeframe. A grant program can drive objectives such as seamless interoperability, promote information and resource sharing, drive cost efficiencies, require use of open and competitive procurement practices, ensure states create sustainable funding mechanisms to support continued operations, and potentially prevent 9-1-1 fee diversion.

APCO has and will always advocate for local control. The recommendations contained in this report, and those to come as the result of future work, in no way diminish that support or alters APCO's position. To the contrary, APCO believes that broadband technology will enable the ECC to enhance local capabilities via shared services like cybersecurity and call delivery, improve information flow, and increase interoperability.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity already presents major challenges for PSAPs, and the threats will only increase with the continued introduction of broadband technologies. PSAPs need additional support to address these challenges. APCO will continue working with expert organizations in the public and private sector to develop educational materials, strategies, and partnerships to give PSAPs the resources they need to prepare for and respond to cyber incidents.



APCO'S NEXT STEPS COMMITMENT

There are a number of steps that APCO will take pursuant to the findings and recommendations of this report. APCO will:

- Undertake an analysis to determine what new or modified standards may be needed as a result of this report, and make recommendations accordingly to APCO's Standards Development Committee
- Review existing training and certification programs and explore the need for changes to address emerging broadband technology
- Create a Task Force on Public Safety Apps that will undertake a number of activities to support and expand upon APCO's efforts by providing subject matter expertise and engaging with public safety professionals and app developers
- Develop an online repository for sharing next generation best practices for PSAPs
- Perform an occupational analysis of the work performed by the next generation PST when appropriate
- Develop and offer a cybersecurity hygiene course for PSAP personnel
- Review existing best practices and guidance related to GIS for opportunities to support PSAPs implementing next generation services
- Update existing and develop new curricula related to broadband implications for the PSAP
- Advocate for federal funding for modernizing 9-1-1

- Consider a next (third) iteration of Project RETAINS to incorporate broadband-specific inputs to help address NG9-1-1 staffing issues

This is a crossroads for the public safety communications profession, and APCO is committed to moving both the technology, and the profession, forward as one. With the continued support of its members, industry and government partners, and innovative thinkers, APCO believes that the ECC of tomorrow is not only possible, but it is absolutely essential to the safety and well-being of every citizen in the United States. Together, this community will transform the PSAP of today into the Emergency Communications Center of tomorrow. ■