



RPC Support Expanded Planning & Frequency Coordination Are Key to Association's Future Success

~ BY CHRIS FISCHER

APCO International's members, leaders and staff have been actively engaged in the 800-MHz rebanding process since the very beginning. We have been working closely with key commercial wireless industry representatives as well as the FCC, the Transition Administrator and the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs) on this effort. It is from this work that APCO International realizes the enormous responsibilities given to the RPCs with little funding or support.

In 1986, the FCC established the National Public Safety Planning Advisory Committee (NPSPAC) to begin spectrum management planning. NPSPAC, in its initial report submitted to the FCC in 1987, recommended regional planning, the allocation of frequencies and technical requirements.

In 1987, the FCC adopted policies, procedures and rules that constituted a national plan for public safety services. At the direction of Congress, the rules specifically allocated the 821-824/866-869-MHz bands for the national plan. The FCC selected these bands because they were adjacent to frequencies already used for public safety purposes (806-821/851-866 MHz).

The FCC tasked APCO International with initiating a regional planning process and appointing a local convener for each region. APCO-AFC was also appointed as the sole coordinator in the 800-MHz band. The FCC did not provide funding for this effort, but APCO International stepped in to fill the gap. APCO-AFC took on the responsibility of providing the much needed educational and technical support to the RPCs to help them comply with the service rules.

A few things have changed in the past 20+ years. As we all know, we are in the middle of rebanding of the 800-MHz channels. In addition, the FCC has since allowed other public safety coordinators to coordinate 800-MHz applications.

As you may already know, AFC recently received a grant from the Public Safety Foundation of America to develop and support a series of regional meetings. The goals of these meetings are to provide educational outreach to the RPCs on modifying their plans to come into compliance with the 800-MHz service rules, foster interoperability improvements to regional plans, provide assistance for repacking regional spectrum resources and provide rebanding status by region.

In addition, APCO International announced in February that APCO-AFC was named as a subcontractor to manage the Computer Assisted Pre-Coordination Resource and Database (CAPRAD) system. As part of the contract, APCO-AFC will provide technical, consultative and personnel support to the 700/800 MHz RPCs and the CAPRAD system.

APCO-AFC has been closely associated with the creation of CAPRAD, including its conception, development and deployment. In 1999, APCO-AFC and other public safety coordinators met to create a software platform that the developing 700-MHz RPCs could use to support their planning efforts to provide cross-regional coordination for 700-MHz assignment, as well as share plans for cross-regional approval. APCO-AFC was the largest public safety coordinator involved in originating and developing CAPRAD, and more than 80% of the individuals actively participating in CAPRAD and 700/800 MHz RPCs are APCO Inter-

national members and/or APCO-AFC local advisors. Further, APCO-AFC was instrumental in the continuation of colloquiums and ongoing CAPRAD training.

APCO-AFC is the premier certified frequency coordination entity serving the public safety industry. It provides the most comprehensive frequency coordination services available and maintains a state-of-the-art proprietary software system to support the functions of frequency coordination exclusively controlled by APCO-AFC. APCO-AFC also utilizes the resources of an extensive network of local unpaid professional experts to assist in its ability to recognize local and regional frequency usage and requirements, which can be leveraged to address the scope of this project.

While many people often associate APCO more closely with public safety communications operations, I think it is important that you, our members, realize the importance and emphasis that we place on the role of the AFC and our technical members. Our work in this aspect of association business is not always as flashy and visible as other areas; however, it is no less important. The role of the regional planning committees and our relationship with the FCC and the Transition Administrator, as well as our commercial partners, are critical for our overall success now and into the future. **||PSC||**



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