



# Smart Savings

## Link Between Your Job Security & Your Agency's Bottom Line

### DEAR RADIOHEAD,

With the current state of the national economy and the fact that telecommunicators in my county haven't had a raise in three years, my co-workers and I are starting to worry about money more than we have in the past. Recently, a neighboring jurisdiction laid off 30 firefighters, even though they were already down 15 from authorized staff. If an agency can lay off firefighters, what's to keep it from laying off telecommunicators? How can we make sure our jobs are secure?

**WORRIED IN GEORGIA**

### DEAR WORRIED,

You're right. Government job security is at its lowest point since the civilianization of the dispatch function. But you don't have to bury your head in the sand. Instead, you can take some steps to help reduce your employer's expenses so layoffs can be avoided.

**Step 1:** Your personal activities may be costing your agency money. Have you taken home pens or printed out your children's homework on the department printer? Go ahead, raise your hand. No matter how ethical we are, most of us have taken advantage of our employers. Those seemingly insignificant individual acts add up to major bucks when multiplied by every instance and by every employee. *Example:* A box of 12 regular, cheap, retractable ball point pens runs about \$7. If your agency has 24 employees who take home two pens per week for a year, the employees just cost the agency \$1,456. Add printer cartridges, paper and staples for a personal 10-page

printing project per employee, per week, and the agency has spent another \$400. That's more than \$1,800 per year on personal use of supplies.

**Step 2:** Look for ways to cut legitimate expenses. Use the duplex function on the printer instead of printing everything one-sided. Recycle paper within the center. Turn off the bathroom lights when no one is using it. Turn the thermostat down to 68°F in the winter and up to 76° in the summer. (Of course, all the radio rooms I've worked in kept the thermostat locked away and set to about 35° all year round, but you get my point.) I've always advocated adding clothes to stay warm rather than taking them off to get cool—especially in mixed

to work! Sick leave and unscheduled overtime cost our industry hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars each year. These funds come from the same money pool that pays your regular salary. The people who haven't worked a full week in years would be the first on any business's list of layoffs. Obviously, collective bargaining may throw a wrench into those plans, but why keep a deadbeat, sick-leave abuser on the payroll over someone who rarely uses sick leave? Administrators need to run the comm center like any other business, especially in times like these. If you like your job, or even just your paycheck, go to work.

I'm sure this isn't the first time you've heard these suggestions, but now is the time to remind ourselves how to tighten our belts. Hopefully, the economy will turn around soon, and we will all come out of this stronger than ever before. In the meantime, we all need to take personal responsibility to cut costs both at work and at home, make ourselves valuable assets to our agencies and prepare for a worst

case scenario. Laying off public safety personnel should always be the last resort when cutting budgets, but you're right, if a department can lay off firefighters, what's to stop an agency from laying off telecommunicators? **||PSC||**

**Editor's note:** The opinions expressed herein are those of the columnist and do not necessarily reflect the views of APCO International.

## Why keep a deadbeat, sick-leave abuser on the payroll over someone who rarely uses sick leave?

company. Bring a sweater, or wear extra socks instead of running that portable heater under your console.

I know this is starting to sound like 1935, but for many comm centers, utilities are the biggest ongoing expense after salaries and benefits. If these measures are good enough for our homes, why aren't they good enough for the workplace? Just because someone else is paying the bill, doesn't mean we shouldn't do our part. [For Radiohead's ideas on economy at home, visit [www.apcointl.org/services/bulletin/smart\\_savings.html](http://www.apcointl.org/services/bulletin/smart_savings.html).]

**Step 3:** If you're *not* sick, go

**TELL IT TO RADIOHEAD** ~  
Got a question for Radiohead? Wanna sound off about an issue? Put it in an e-mail to [PSCeditor@apcointl.org](mailto:PSCeditor@apcointl.org).

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