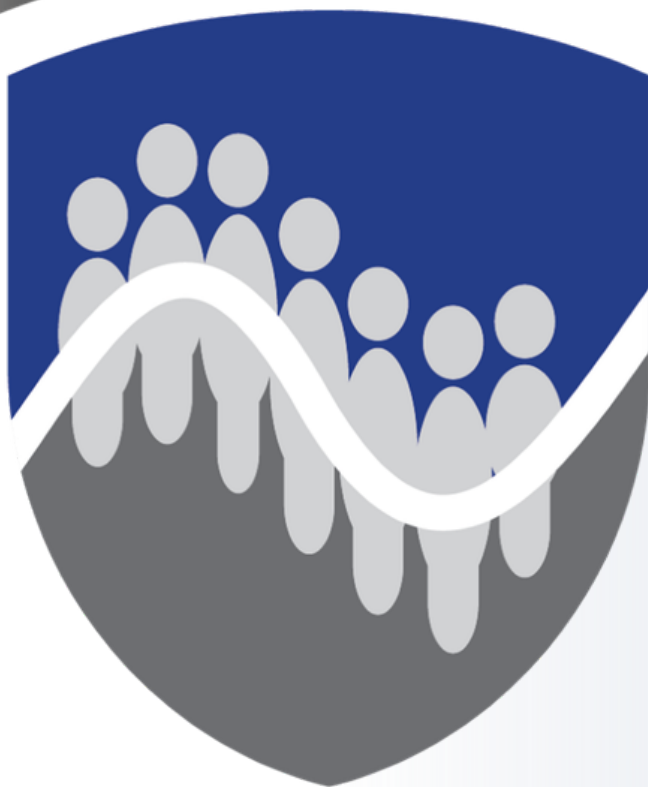




APCO

MEMBER CHAPTER SERVICES Committee

August & September *newsletter*

BACK-TO-SCHOOL SEASON

MAY THE GERMS BE EVER IN YOUR FAVOR

Back-to-school season is here, which means the dispatch center is about to become one big petri dish. Between coworkers, kids, grandkids, and shared consoles, someone is bound to bring home more than homework!

Give your immune system a fighting chance: stay hydrated, get enough sleep when you can, wash your hands often, and wipe down shared equipment before your shift. A little vitamin C probably wouldn't hurt either - because nobody has time to catch the "back-to-school crud" when the phones are already contagious enough!

Inside This Issue

- 2 Membership Momentum
- 4 Silent Key
- 5 911 Pulse Check
- 6 Inside the Committees
- 10 Health & Wellness
- 13 State Chapter Highlights
- 15 Teammates In Action
- 18 Upcoming Events
- 23 MCSC Members



Membership *momentum in july*

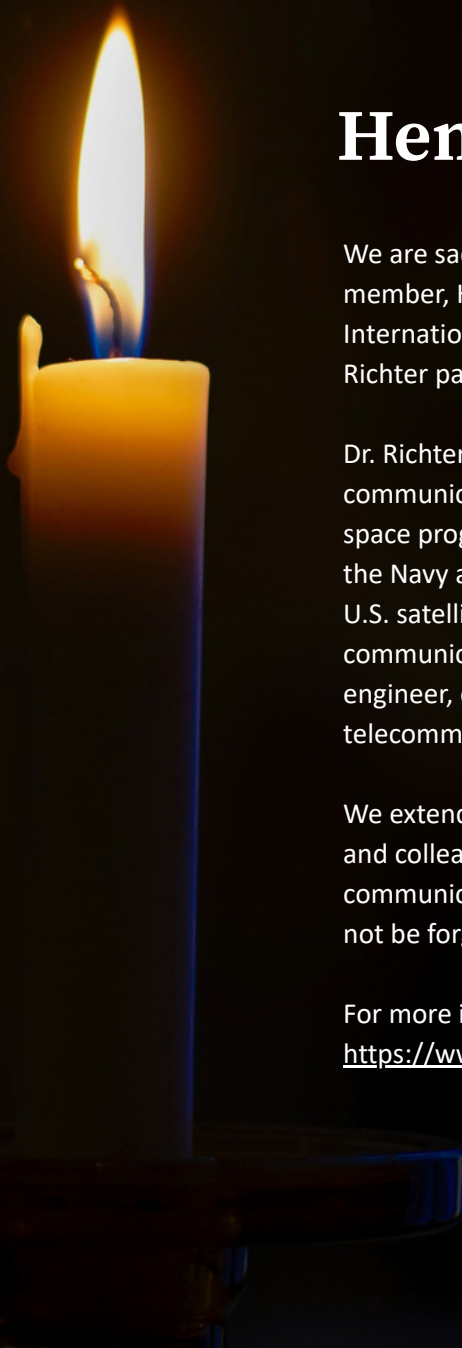
Membership Type	Previous Year 07/01/2025	This Year 07/01/2026
Associate Members	1,805	1,710
Full Members	3,632	3,451
Full Group Members	10,162	11,136
Online Group Members	25,453	27,675
Commercial Members	399	401
Commercial Group Members	398	352
Student/Educator Members	36	60
Total Number of Members	41,885	44,785
Total Number of Group Agencies	1,723	1,758
Commercial Groups	52	52

Membership *momentum in august*

Membership Type	Previous Year 08/01/2025	This Year 08/01/2026
Associate Members	1,833	1,733
Full Members	3,691	3,531
Full Group Members	10,156	11,194
Online Group Members	25,475	27,847
Commercial Members	419	418
Commercial Group Members	397	374
Student/Educator Members	55	61
Total Number of Members	42,026	45,158
Total Number of Group Agencies	1,736	1,772
Commercial Groups	53	59

SILENT KEY

With deep respect and gratitude, we remember those who have recently passed and who devoted their lives to the mission of public safety communications. These individuals were the unseen lifelines in times of crisis — calm voices in the chaos, steady hands behind the scenes. Though their keys have fallen silent, their legacy of service and dedication lives on in every life they touched and every call they answered.



Henry L Richter, PH.D

We are saddened to share the news of the passing of long-time member, Henry L. Richter, Ph.D., a Life Member of APCO International and the Southern California (CPRA) Chapter. Dr. Richter passed away on August 12 at the age of 99.

Dr. Richter's remarkable career spanned public safety communications, engineering, and even the early days of the U.S. space program. He first joined APCO in 1946 following his service in the Navy and went on to contribute to the development of the first U.S. satellite in Earth orbit before returning to public safety communications. Throughout his long career—as a communications engineer, consultant, and respected expert in radio telecommunications—he made lasting contributions to the field.

We extend our sincere condolences to Dr. Richter's family, friends, and colleagues. His legacy and contributions to both public safety communications and the broader field of telecommunications will not be forgotten.

For more information, his Silent Key can be found here:
<https://www.apcointl.org/psc/silent-key-henry-leopold-richter/>

911 PULSE CHECK

Hello APCO members!

This month, we're chatting about emergency communications and AI, and we want to hear from you!

Take a minute (seriously, it's quick!) to respond to these surveys and share your thoughts. We're hoping to get as many responses as possible!

Thanks for being part of the conversation!



APCO-George Mason University ECC Survey

The information gathered through this survey will help create one of the most comprehensive pictures of the current state of emergency communications. The results will be used to identify trends, measure workforce challenges, inform future research, support advocacy efforts, and guide the development of resources that directly benefit ECCs and the professionals who serve within them. Complete the survey to be entered into a random drawing for one of eight Visa gift cards (up to \$500). The survey is anonymous and takes about 25 minutes to complete. **The deadline is 10/15.**

https://gmu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bw5R2Ik3KK0Flum

State of AI in Public Safety

APCO is partnering with RapidSOS on a survey about the state of AI in public safety. We're asking ECC leaders and public safety telecommunicators what's working, what's holding agencies back and what resources would help as agencies consider where AI fits into their operations. The survey is anonymous and takes about 15 minutes to complete. **The survey closes 9/16.**

<https://rapidsos.typeform.com/to/L5SOlgAs?typeform-source=www.apcointl.org>

Inside the Committees

The Driving Force Behind the Scenes

Meet Your APCO Group Leaders

Every year, APCO International welcomes hundreds of volunteers who serve on committees that shape training, standards, technology, policy, and professional development across our industry. Supporting that work is a small but essential team: the APCO Group Leaders – six volunteers appointed annually by the incoming APCO President to help keep committees aligned, supported, and connected to APCO's mission.

Group Leaders act as the bridge between committee leadership and the APCO Executive Committee, ensuring APCO's most active and influential committees operate smoothly throughout the year. Each Group Leader works with three to four committees, offering guidance, monitoring Goals & Deliverables, troubleshooting challenges, and helping maintain continuity from one committee year to the next.

A structured review cycle anchors their work: an in-person mid-year progress review each January, followed by a June meeting to close out the committee year and establish Goals & Deliverables for the next year. These checkpoints ensure committees begin each year with clarity, direction, and a strong foundation.

Through it all, Group Leaders serve as mentors, motivators, and partners – a steady support system that helps committee leaders thrive and ensures APCO's resources, standards and best practices remain high-quality, consistent, and strategically aligned for the benefit of all members.

A Word of Thanks

APCO's committees are powered by volunteers - professionals who give their time, expertise, and passion to strengthen our industry. The Group Leaders are honored to support that work and help ensure every committee has the tools, guidance, and encouragement needed to succeed.

To all committee members, chairs, vice chairs, and volunteers across APCO: thank you for your dedication. Your work continues to shape the future of public safety communications.

The Team



Grayson Gusa

Davie County 911 Communications (NC)

Grayson, Chair of the Group Leaders, began his public safety career through a high school internship with the Salisbury (NC) Police Department. That experience led to a part-time communications role in 2002 and, ultimately, a two-decade career in communications operations, training, and leadership. He now serves as Training Supervisor for Davie County 911. As Group Leader Chair, he helps guide committee leaders and strengthen communication between committees and the Executive Committee. He encourages members to “take the leap” into committee work. Outside of work, he enjoys traveling across the U.S. and Canada and spending time with his two German Shepherds, Denali and Juneau.



Ariana Kitty

Paducah McCracken County 911 (KY)

Ariana entered emergency communications right out of college thanks to her sister’s encouragement, and that decision set the tone for a career built on steady leadership and now helping others find their place in APCO. As E911 Manager for Paducah McCracken County 911, she brings a calm, thoughtful approach to operations and committee work. Her advice to members is simple: start – explore committees, attend the committee sign up webinar, and trust that everyone has something to contribute. She enjoys traveling and spending time with her dogs, Bowie and Cash.



Christine Messengale

State of Tennessee TACN (TN)

Christine began her public safety career as a college dispatcher, quickly discovering that shaped her professional path. Now Manager of the Network Operations Center for Tennessee’s statewide TACN radio system, she brings technical expertise and a thoughtful perspective to committee work. She encourages members to choose committees that challenge them or spark curiosity. Outside of work, she stays busy with her family’s hobby farm of chickens, turkeys, goats, a rabbit, dogs, cats, and three horses.

The Team



Tim Stencil

Lake County Emergency Communications (IL)

Tim entered emergency communications after the 2009 economic downturn limited his aviation opportunities, drawing on his university police experience to move into dispatching. Since joining APCO committee work in 2017, he has built lasting professional relationships, chaired the Young Professionals Committee, and advanced into the role of Group Leader. His leadership approach focuses on minimizing unnecessary busy work and prioritizing what truly matters. Outside of work, Tim enjoys life with his wife, two daughters, and their Bernedoodle, Abby. He also plays saxophone and is a certified pilot and flight instructor.



Christine Moore

Guilford Metro 9-1-1 (NC)

Christine started her career with the High Point Police Department in 1999 and later became a sworn officer. When she and her husband began their family, she transitioned into emergency communications – a move that led her to Guilford Metro 9-1-1, where she now serves as Deputy Director of Operations. Known for her authenticity and accountability, she often shares her favorite advice: “If you aren’t making mistakes, you aren’t working hard enough.” At home, she enjoys life with her three cats, her husband of 25 years and celebrating her daughter Rhyann’s accomplishments at UNC-Chapel Hill.



Melissa Stroh

Idaho State Police (ID)

Melissa discovered emergency communications while job-hunting after a move, and the profession quickly became a defining part of her life – even as she continued pursuing her dream of attending law school. She now serves as Regional Communications Center Coordinator for the Idaho State Police. She encourages members to join committees to expand their knowledge and build meaningful connections. Outside of work, she leads an active life of hiking, triathlons, photography, 4-H leadership, and traveling to every national park with her daughter. Her home is shared with Goose, a therapy dog, and Marz, her Belgian companion.

Building **CONNECTIONS**, Creating **OPPORTUNITIES**

By Kyleah Carruthers



If you're 35 or under and working in public safety, APCO's Young Professionals Committee is focused on helping you **connect, grow, and get involved** in the profession.

One of the committee's biggest projects is helping plan the annual **Young Professionals Mixer & Service Project** at the APCO International Conference & Exposition. It's a chance for young professionals from across the country to meet, expand their networks, have some fun, and give back to the conference host community.

The committee also creates resources to help young professionals navigate and grow their careers. Publications have covered topics like **communicating with local government officials** and **best practices for hosting networking events**. Members also collaborate with other APCO committees, including co-hosting webinars with the **Member & Chapter Services Committee** on topics such as establishing successful mentorship programs.

Another favorite is the **Young Professional Spotlight**, which recognizes public safety professionals age 35 and younger who are making an impact in their agencies, communities, and the profession. Know someone doing great things? Nominate them! It's an easy way to give an up-and-coming professional some well-deserved recognition and share their story with the APCO community.

Whether you want to grow your network, develop professionally, or get more involved, the Young Professionals Committee is a great place to start. **You don't have to wait until "someday" to make an impact - your voice and your ideas matter now.**

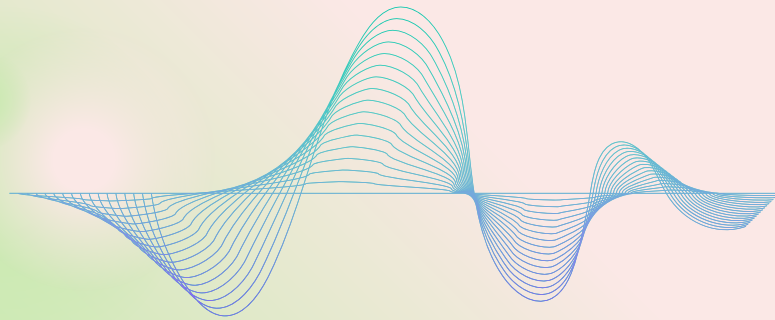


Know a Young Professional Who Shines?
[Nominate them for the Young Professional Spotlight!](#)

Health & Wellness

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT: SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN 9-1-1

An interview with Duana Dailey on wellness
and peer support by Erica Johnson



September is National Suicide Prevention Month, a crucial time to acknowledge the silent toll that constant exposure to crisis takes on the physical, emotional, and mental health of public safety professionals. Among these dedicated individuals, 9-1-1 emergency communicators often bear an invisible burden, processing the most critical and traumatic moments of people's lives.

To shed light on this vital issue, we spoke with Duana Dailey, a former 911 supervisor at the Raleigh-Wake Emergency Communication Center (RWECC) with over 17 years in public safety. She currently serves as the Emergency Communication Manager at Duke Health Communications in Durham, NC.

A Conversation on Mental Wellness

We sat down with Duana Dailey to discuss the unique mental health challenges faced by 9-1-1 professionals and the strategies being implemented to support them.

Q: Was there a specific event or turning point that heightened your awareness of mental health issues within the 9-1-1 field?

A: The impact of a former coworker's suicide in 2018 was profoundly difficult. It underscored years of unaddressed grief and a significant lack of mental health resources tailored for dispatchers. Later, in 2022, another agency tragedy further emphasized the persistent need for better support systems in our field.

Q: What are some coping strategies and self-care practices you advocate for?

A: I personally find meditation, yoga, and regular workouts to be incredibly beneficial. It's also vital to reserve at least one dedicated day per week for self-care – whether it's a simple pedicure, a nice dinner out, or engaging in a hobby. And, of course, professional therapy is an invaluable resource.

Q: What are the primary challenges in supporting staff mental well-being in a 9-1-1 center?

A: It's a delicate balance. We grapple with compassion fatigue, the complexities of building and maintaining employee trust, and the risk of burnout that comes from wanting to help everyone. A significant challenge is also the need for stronger administrative support for those of us on the operational front lines.

Q: How have you incorporated mental health awareness into your role as a supervisor?

A: A significant step was spearheading the creation of the peer support and wellness team at RWECC. We officially launched this initiative in October 2023, aiming to provide a more accessible and understanding support network for our colleagues.

Q: What kind of support system do you believe every dispatch center should have in place?

A: I strongly advocate for the implementation of peer support and wellness teams. Crucially, there should also be direct access to a clinician who specializes in providing time-sensitive support specifically for emergency communications personnel.

Q: Are there any particularly helpful programs, trainings, or resources you recommend?

A: The NENA (National Emergency Number Association) Wellness Continuum offers a comprehensive framework, and the North Carolina Peer Support Team is another excellent resource for specialized training and support.

Building a Culture of Support

The key takeaway from our conversation with Duana Dailey is the critical need to foster a culture where asking for help is not only accepted but actively supported, respected, and expected. Emergency dispatchers are the unseen heroes of our communities, and it is imperative that they know they are not alone in facing the profound emotional and psychological demands of their profession.

Resources for Mental Wellness

For those seeking further information and support, the following resources are highly recommended:

- **NENA Wellness Continuum:** <https://www.nena.org/page/WellnessContinuum>
- **North Carolina Peer Support:** <https://ncfrps.org/>

The Power of Re-evaluating Your Why

A Fresh Start for Telecommunicators

By Erica Johnson



Burnout is real.

Sometimes it's hard to remember why you chose this field and why making a difference mattered so much in the beginning. Remembering your "why" isn't always easy. And what if your "why" has changed - what now? Here are some reasons it might feel like your "why" has shifted over the years:

1. **A shift in identity within your role as a telecommunicator.** Changes in your organization's culture can create feelings of misalignment or uncertainty about where you fit within your agency.
2. **Loss of motivation from routine.** After doing the same work day in and day out for years, the job may no longer provide the same sense of purpose or drive you had when you first started.
3. **Plain and simple burnout.** The emotional, physical, and psychological toll of burnout builds over time. Before you know it, chronic fatigue, irritability, and anxiety become part of your daily life - and you can't pinpoint why.

If reconnecting with your original "why" doesn't feel possible, here are a few steps to help you move forward:

1. **Reassess your priorities.** Changes in your professional or personal life may require you to redefine your sense of purpose.
2. **Identify what you value most.** Write down the aspects of your role that matter most to you and rank them. Use this list to realign your mindset and set new goals.
3. **Embrace a changing "why."** A shift in purpose can open doors to growth and fresh perspectives. New goals, new ideas, and new colleagues can bring renewed energy and endless possibilities.

Refocusing your intentions during or after burnout is especially vital in a demanding role like telecommunications. When the work becomes overwhelming, stepping back to realign your "why" helps you reconnect with what truly drives you. By consciously redefining your direction, you not only regain a sense of control and motivation but also strengthen your ability to serve others with focus, resilience, and renewed commitment.

References

Wright, B.E, Hassan, S., & Baluran, D. A. (2025). Motivation, Meaning and Burnout: Understanding Frontline Public Service Workers' Work Experience During Turbulent Times. *Public Administration Review*, 1-15

State Chapter highlights

Florida Chapter Installs 2026-2027 Board of Officers

By Will Young



Pictured (left to right): Will Young, Christina Jernigan, Gail Hall, Jenny Mason, Ivorie Barnes, Vonda Jones, Trae Maeder, Brandie Ball, Samantha Johnson

During its recent Annual Conference, the Florida Chapter of APCO installed its 2026–2027 Board of Officers. This year's conference theme, *The Key to Our Future: Supporting Our People*, reflects the Board's commitment to strengthening the profession by investing in the people who serve Florida's communities every day.

Leading the Chapter as **President is Trae Maeder, ACE, ENP, RPL**, who has served in public safety communications since 2015 and on the Florida APCO Board since 2021. Trae is passionate about training, organizational culture, and professional development. Away from work, you'll usually find him with a Kindle in hand or planning his next cruise adventure.

Serving as **President-Elect is Gail Hall**, who brings more than 22 years of experience in public safety communications, including the past nine years as Duty Officer Supervisor for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Jacksonville Regional Communications Center. A member of the Board since 2023, Gail enjoys spending time with family and friends, spoiling her dog Charlie, and planning her next cruise.

Immediate Past President Ivorie Barnes has served the profession since 2004 and has been a member of the Board since 2022. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, crafting, cooking, and traveling.

Chapter Secretary William “Will” Young entered public safety communications in 2021 after a career in public education and joined the Florida APCO Board in 2025. He is passionate about continuous improvement, writing, and orcas.

Treasurer Brandie Ball, RPL, dedicated 33 years to the St. Petersburg Police Department’s Emergency Communications Division, including 17 years as Training Supervisor. She has served as Chapter Treasurer since 2021 and currently chairs the APCO International Awards Committee. In her free time, Brandie enjoys traveling, audiobooks, movies, and spending time with her Newfoundland, Abby.

Executive Council Representative Yavonneda “Vonda” Jones has served the public safety communications profession since 1996 and has been a member of the Florida APCO Board since 2017, including serving as Chapter President during the 2021–2022 term. Known for her servant’s heart, Vonda enjoys life with her family as a wife, mother, and Gigi.

The Chapter currently has two of its three At-Large Board Member positions filled and plans to conduct a special election to fill the remaining seat.

Samantha Johnson, now serving her third term on the Board, began her career in 2006 and enjoys family vacations, the beach, horses, and baseball.

Christina Jernigan also entered the profession in 2006, became a Communications Shift Supervisor in 2020, and joined APCO in 2026. She is passionate about helping others and values time with her family.

Rounding out the Board is **Commercial Advisory Member Jenny Mason**, joined by her faithful companion, Gizmo. Jenny is CEO of Communication Center Specialists (CCS) and has spent more than 20 years supporting the public safety communications industry. She served as an APCO International Commercial Advisory Committee member from 2013 through 2020 and remains committed to bringing people together in support of the 9-1-1 professionals who serve our communities every day.

The Florida Chapter looks forward to another year of collaboration, professional development, and service to its members as the 2026–2027 Board works to advance the profession and support Florida’s public safety communications community.

Teammates *in Action*

Carynn Gayton

Laraway Communications Center, IL

Amid a declared disaster that generated over 1,800 calls for service in just two hours handled by six on-duty telecommunicators, joined by leadership staff, every assisting 9-1-1 center responded with exceptional professionalism. Yet one neighboring telecommunicator's actions rose above.

Laraway Communications Center Telecommunicator Carynn Gayton received a call from a concerned family member whose loved ones in Kankakee County could not reach 9-1-1. When her attempt to transfer the call routed to a backup PSAP looped between Grundy County 9-1-1 and Kendall County 9-1-1, she made a critical decision: she held the line.

Rather than pass the call along, she maintained the only confirmed line of communication with a potentially life-threatening scene, ensuring the caller was not lost in the system and that help would ultimately be reached. In a moment where it would have been easy to defer, she chose ownership, continuity, and care above all.

Her actions were not just procedural; they were principled. She held the line when it mattered most. She ensured connection when systems were strained. She embodied what integrity in emergency communications truly looks like. In the chaos of the storm, she was calm. In the breakdown, she was the bridge.

TC Gayton's exemplary performance is truly a Thin Gold Line's Teammate in Action.





Lisa Strahla

KanComm 911 ECC, IL

On March 10, 2026, our community faced one of the most significant natural disasters in its history.

What began as a forecasted severe thunderstorm escalated rapidly into a catastrophic event, overwhelming our center with an unprecedented volume and complexity of emergency calls. With a staffing complement of six telecommunicators, the on-duty Administrative Supervisor, and the Director, our team entered the shift prepared strategically assigning positions based on demonstrated skill, experience, and operational strengths.

Recognizing the anticipated surge in fire-related incidents, Telecommunicator Lisa Strahla was assigned to Fire A, the countywide channel responsible for the highest call volume during large-scale events. Lisa brought with her 38 years of experience across multiple agencies, with a proven record of excellence in high-risk, high-demand fire and EMS operations. Her expertise, built through years of handling complex incidents and reinforced by her disciplined approach to self-development, made her the clear choice for this critical role.

As the storm intensified, a barrage of 4-inch hail struck the facility, creating an environment so loud it impaired communication within the room. Despite these conditions, the team processed over 900 calls in the first 40 minutes alone calls involving vehicle crashes, injuries, gas leaks, structure fires, downed power lines, entrapments, and widespread destruction.

Over the course of two relentless hours, Lisa simultaneously managed two active fire radio channels while coordinating a MABAS Disaster Box involving multiple agencies and a Tactical Rescue Team. She effectively processed and dispatched over 1,800 calls for service, maintaining operational control, clarity, and composure under extraordinary pressure.

Her performance exemplified mastery in emergency communications, balancing speed, accuracy, and coordination in a rapidly evolving disaster environment. Beyond her assigned shift, Lisa remained on duty for an additional two hours to ensure continuity of operations and the proper processing and documentation of all calls. Lisa Strahla's actions on March 10 were not only a reflection of her experience but of her unwavering commitment to service.

In the face of chaos, she provided stability. In the midst of overwhelming demand, she delivered precision. Her leadership on the console ensured that critical resources were deployed, lives were protected, and our mission was upheld.

Meghan Howard

KanComm 911 ECC, IL

To the baby girl of Meghan Howard,

You will most likely not remember the night the storm came, the night the sky turned loud, and the winds carried fear through an entire community. You won't remember the hail, the tornado, or the urgency that filled the air. But one day, you will hear the story. And when you do, you will learn something extraordinary about your mom.

On the night that the storm tore through our community, your mama went to work not knowing just how much she would be needed, but ready, as she always is, to help others.



She had just recently returned to work after her maternity leave with you. When the danger became real and seconds mattered, your mom was the one who activated the tornado warning sirens. That single decision sent a message across the entire community: take cover, get safe, protect yourselves.

Because of her, people moved. Parents grabbed their children. Neighbors looked out for one another. A community took shelter. Because of your mom, thousands had a chance to be safe. But her work did not stop with that warning. As the storm passed and the damage began to reveal itself, the phones started ringing, again and again and again. Voices filled with fear. People who were unsure if help would come. People who needed someone to answer.

For the next one hour and 40 minutes, your mom stood in the middle of that storm's aftermath, not outside in the wind, but in something just as powerful: the responsibility to help. Alongside a small team of six, she helped answer nearly 1,447 emergency calls. Each call was a person. A family. A moment of fear, reaching out for help.

And through every one of them, your mom was there. Calm. Steady. Focused. She was the voice people heard when everything else felt uncertain. She was the connection between those in danger and the responders racing to reach them. She helped make sure help kept moving, no matter how overwhelming it became.

Your mom is the calm in the storm.
The voice in the dark.
The steady hand when everything feels uncertain.

Because of her actions that night, families received a warning. Responders received direction. And an entire community had hope when they needed it most. That night will forever be part of this community's story. And at the heart of it will always be your mom, one of the quiet heroes who stood watch over us all.

And you will know that the same strength, courage, and heart that protected a community... is the same love that holds you every single day.

Upcoming *Events*



SEPTEMBER

SAVE THE DATE

SEPTEMBER
13-16
2026

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OHIO APCO/NENA
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Register for the Public Safety Innovation Summit Featuring 5x5

Join us December 1-2 in Orlando, Florida, for the newest event in APCO's Summit Series: the Public Safety Innovation Summit featuring 5x5. Explore the full arc of public safety innovation — from emerging broadband capabilities to next-generation tools being developed and deployed today. Discover cutting-edge solutions, hear from industry leaders, connect with peers from across the profession and help shape the future of responder communications technology. Brought to you by APCO and the First Responder Network Authority, with technical contributions from National Institute of Standards and Technology's Public Safety Communications Research Division. Register now:
<https://apcosummits.org/innovation/registration/>



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- Leadership
- Health/ Wellness
- Emerging Technology
- Legislative Updates
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- Free Conference Shirt
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- Vendor Prizes

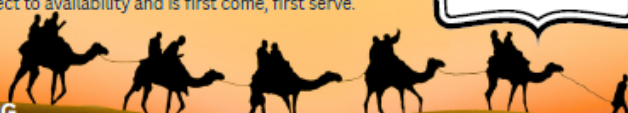
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Make connections
that strengthen
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9/11 DISCUSSION PANEL

25TH ANNIVERSARY



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Experienced leader.
Innovative thinker.
Compelling storyteller.
Inspiring others.

FEATURING

Andrew Baxter



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FOOD TRUCKS

Join us for a variety of
delicious food options
and good company!



TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER 29TH

AWARDS DINNER

RSVP ONLY

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public safety
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SEPTEMBER 30TH

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Town and Country
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WORKGROUP ABBREVIATIONS

LMC - Life Member Content Working Group

NWG - Newsletter Working Group

PWG - Polls Working Group

TIA - Teammates in Action Working Group

TWG - Toolkit Working Group

WEB - Webinars Working Group