



How an APCO Standard Is Created Following a Road Map

~ BY CRYSTAL N. McDUFFIE, RPL, ENP

Ever wonder how an APCO International standard is created? What process is followed? How they “know” what to write?

The APCO International Standards Development Committee (SDC) begins with what they call a road map. This road map covers nearly all aspects of public safety communications, broken down by broad topics and then specific functions. The road map is dynamic; it changes as needs of the PSAP change, as technology changes or operational functions change.

Once a topic area has been identified, a search for the subject matter experts (SMEs) begins. These experts are you—our members. SMEs provide the content of these standards in a couple of ways. First, you may participate in an occupational (OA) or process analysis (PA). These OAs or PAs are one- or two-day workshops designed for communications experts, like you, to help us determine what core competencies are needed for a specific job, what minimum training is required, and what the specific functions and responsibilities are for that position. You may also participate as a member of a work group, which may be created to look at a specific area of operation and draft a standard based on your group’s expertise.

APCO AS AN ANSI APPROVED STANDARDS DEVELOPER

It all begins with an idea. Once an idea for a standard is established and approved by the SDC, a project initiation notification or PIN is filed with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

The PIN is published for the public for 30 days. During that time, the public may submit comments regarding our project.

Once the PIN is accepted, the work begins. It’s time to draft the standard.

Once the draft is complete, it is

submitted to the SDC or one of its subcommittees for review. Any concerns noted by the SDC are addressed with the SMEs who penned the standard. After that, it’s time for public review and comment.

Per ANSI procedure, all candidate standards are published for a 45-day public review and comment period. The candidate standard is posted on our website, announcements are made in many of our publications, as well as ANSI publications, and a press release is sent. During the period, all comments on that particular standard are collected. These can range from grammatical issues to content concerns. In keeping with our policies, all comments are addressed by the SME work group and the SDC. Each person who submits a comment will receive a response with an explanation.

Once all comments have been reviewed and the final standard is ready, the candidate standard is submitted to ANSI for final approval. Once approved, the standard is published.

As an ANSI-accredited standards developer, APCO International is dedicated to ensuring public safety communications has a role in the development of standards that affect our industry. APCO’s standards development activities have a broad scope, ranging from the actual development of standards to the representation of public safety communications in other standards development areas.

APCO International is required to adhere to ANSI’s essential requirements for due process and has developed policies accordingly for the development and coordination of American National Standards (ANS). These procedures provide a mechanism for announcements regarding standards development activities, ensuring that qualified organizations

develop them, harmonization if duplicate or conflicting standards exist, and that the approval of standards is coordinated. ANSI further ensures that access to the standards process—including an appeals mechanism—has been made available to anyone directly or materially affected by the activity under development and requires periodic reviews to ensure the standard is a “living” document. Adherence to these guidelines ensures APCO’s standards development process provides due process, balance and lack of dominance, as well as provides opportunities to address all interests and work together toward a common solution.

There are several operational, technical and training standards currently under development. You can review them at www.apcointl.org/911-resources/standards/apco-standards-in-progress.html.

SDC CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

APCO’s SDC is seeking qualified public safety communications professionals to serve on subcommittees and workgroups. Applications are accepted year round for user, producer and general interest categories within the operational, training and technical subcommittees. Public safety communications professionals interested in participating in APCO International’s standards development activities are asked to complete the SDC application form or contact APCO International’s Communications Center & 9-1-1 Services Department at standards@apcointl.org.

For more information on APCO International’s standards development activities contact standards@apcointl.org.

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CRYSTAL N. McDUFFIE, RPL, ENP, is Communications Center & 9-1-1 Services manager for APCO International. Contact her via e-mail at mcduffiec@apcointl.org.