

## When to Call Your APCO Local Frequency Advisor

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This brief story should help the public to understand when it is appropriate to call their local advisor and when they should call APCO AFC. The APCO Local Advisor Network consists of 75 men and women who share their skills with APCO. They are experts in the field of Public Safety Communications and trained in current FCC licensing and frequency coordination procedures. Many have been with APCO as FCC Licensing evolved from the early days of radio to the complex, automated maze of programs that make up the coordination systems of today. The Local Advisors' training is on-going and technically advanced. As the FCC releases new rules and changes to APCO, they are immediately passed on to the Local Advisors. They are a vital and current source of information for members requiring assistance in licensing their radio systems. Some Advisors prefer that applicants call them prior to submitting an application to APCO. That saves a certain amount of errors from having to be corrected. However, considering that most advisors have more work than can be easily handled, you should first find out if such a call can be managed on a routine basis. The AFC Staff works closely with Local Advisors and would welcome such questions.

One of the most important roles Advisors perform is frequency coordination on applications that have been pre-screened by a regional processor. Advisors can help applicants with the coordination process, answer questions about FCC rules and procedures and investigate interference problems. They ultimately assign the frequency that agencies will use in the field.

Advisors play an important role by staying involved in planning for 700 and 800 MHz spectrum allocations. They remain involved from the planning stage through the licensing stage, and all the way through the second or third window of modifications. All the planning meetings Local Advisors attend to remain involved are time-consuming but show the depth of dedication they have for their communities. APCO appreciates the many man hours Advisors volunteer in the name of public safety communications.

If your agency is in the planning stages of a new radio system, you will need to do some investigating to find out about frequency availability very early in the planning stage. Without sufficient spectrum, it may be necessary for you to gear your system to a different band, or location, borrow spectrum from other coordinators or plan to share with other agencies. Don't make the mistake of putting your cart before the horse. The Local Advisor may be able to give you a fairly realistic but informal estimate of availability in his state or region, particularly if he has been at it a long time. It would be wise to get some early advice from him, for advice from an expert. As I indicated earlier, your Advisor will want to discuss a new system, particularly if it is a large system, or unique in some way. He will probably give you valuable tips on how to proceed. Depending on the amount of congestion at the site of the proposed system, it may also be appropriate to contact APCO's Engineering Department for more specific information. The Engineering Staff can

run searches that will pinpoint if interference will be an issue and the frequency band that offers the best availability. That could save an agency from committing further resources to a band or location that is not suitable for the proposed radio system. Keep in mind that frequencies that appear available at the time of the search may not be available when the application is submitted for coordination simply because APCO cannot hold frequencies.

Are you still wondering how one decides whether to contact their Local Advisor or the Headquarters office? In many cases, either one can help. If you need information about a local problem, consider that the Advisor knows the players; he's familiar with the terrain, local frequency usage and local politics. He has connections that could save you time. So if it's a question related to a new or existing radio system located in a specific area of the Advisor's region, it would be wise to contact the Local Advisor rather than the processor.

How does one find their Local Advisor? Refer to the listing in this issue of the magazine or APCO's web site. Select [www.apcoafc.org](http://www.apcoafc.org). Under "Frequency Coordination" and "Hot RF", the second paragraph has a selection called "Local Frequency Advisors" that is updated frequently. You can be sure of updated information on the web. You can also contact the AFC Office at 386-322-2500 and ask one of the staff to direct you to the correct Local Advisor.

If the question is a simple status check, the AFC office at 386-322-2500, can handle your call. Any questions requesting a fee quote must be answered by the AFC Office. Plan to fax a copy of your application form to 386-322-2502, or your regional Processor's unique fax number in order to get an accurate fee quote.

AFC's Processing Staff is trained extensively in FCC Rules and FCC Licensing while the Local Advisors are involved in the technical process of frequency coordination. Although there is certainly some overlap, that should give you a good rule of thumb in deciding whether to call your Processor or your Advisor.

Technical questions involving engineering studies should be referred to the AFC Engineering Department. Please refer to the AFC brochures for the fees on the services provided by APCO AFC. The Engineering Department and Licensing Service can provide many services to make things flow smoothly from engineering, through the Licensing Service, and on to Frequency Coordination. Then your application will be sent electronically to the FCC.

AFC's top-of-the-line frequency coordination, knowledgeable staff and expert Local Advisors will guide you through the frequency coordination process and speed you on your way to an FCC license.

[www.apcoafc.org](http://www.apcoafc.org)

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