

**ATLANTIC CHAPTER
APCO INTERNATIONAL
CHAPTER MEETING PLANNING GUIDE**

FORWARD

This document sets forth a guide to be used by the host Conference Committee, in the planning, presentation and administration of the Atlantic Chapter Conference and Annual Meeting. Its origin is based upon the requirements of the Constitution and By Laws of the Association for the Conference, which state in essence that the Association and its Chapters will work toward common goals in a uniform manner.

One of the most important components of the Chapter Conference is the Annual Chapter Meeting. This meeting will be convened during the Conference and will adjourn with the closing gavel after the installation of the Chapter Board of Directors. The Chapter Annual Meetings are an important part of the APCO tradition. The quorum will conduct the business of the association required by the Chapter Constitution and its' By-Laws. In order to be successful however, the Chapter Conference must also be a benefit to the attendees, the corporate participants, and the Chapter.

It is with understanding and appreciation for that relationship that the minimum standards herein have been established. By following recognized standards, the organization as a whole may be strengthened.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
Intent	3
Chapter Conference Steering Committee	4
Basic Conference Guidelines	4
Committee Responsibilities	5
Conference Chair	5
Program Chair	6
General Arrangements	7
Registration	9
Exhibits	11
Entertainment	14
Publicity	14
Volunteer	14

INTENT

The intent of these guidelines is to provide a working platform to Conference Chairs and their committee members. It has been developed utilizing the experiences of past successful Conference Chairs and those of the Atlantic Chapter Conference Steering Committee.

The Atlantic Chapter Conference should

- Increase cooperation between the Chapter and its members.
- Provide a larger meeting forum (and in-depth information on Association matters) for members normally unable to attend National or Regional Conferences & Expositions.
- Increase Chapter membership,
- Provide a showcase for vendors at a more local level than that provided by the National or Regional Conferences & Expositions.
- Provide a forum for discussing issues that have arisen since the last Chapter Meeting and to address issues for the next Chapter Meeting.
- Provide a means of making interim project reports.
- Present state of the art workshops as reflected in area requirements.
- Propose and act upon legislative matters of interest to the Chapter.
- Increase rapport between the Atlantic Chapter and the Association.
- Write and approve resolutions for presentation at the Annual Conference & Exposition.
- Train future Atlantic Chapter Annual Meeting Chairs.
- Recruit future Chapter officers.
- Provide a forum for Association Officers to provide interim reports on the associations activities.
- Provide training for Managers, Supervisors, Telecommunicators and Technicians for the purpose of general education and career advancement,
- Networking and fellowship.

CHAPTER CONFERENCE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Chapter Conference Steering Committee was established to provide the members of the Host state committees with guidelines and information that they would need for the planning and presentation of a successful Chapter Conference.

BASIC CONFERENCE GUIDELINES

The host State Conference Committee should have at least a two-year lead-time for the proper planning of their Conference. The Chapter Conference Steering Committee shall have a checklist for contracts, mailings and review the host States' planning at the Annual Chapter meeting each year.

Proposed dates of the Chapter Conference

The Chapter Conference shall be scheduled between October 1 and November 15 each year. It shall not be scheduled to occur during any major religious holiday.

The Chapter Conference shall not exceed three (3) days from the time it is convened until it is adjourned. It is preferable that the program schedule be set up in conjunction with the weekend. Typically, the conference starts with a welcome reception Sunday evening and the actual start is Monday morning and ends Wednesday noon or afternoon. Registration and socials may occur on the day preceding the Conference.

Site Selection

Careful consideration must be given to the available facilities of any site being considered. At a minimum, the site must be able to accommodate:

- Exhibit space for 50 to 60 10' X 8' booths
- Meeting rooms (at least 2) capable of holding 75-100 people set theater style. If space is available, consider 3 rooms as there is the possibility of 3 simultaneous tracks.
- Smaller office rooms for committees (preferable at least 3)
- A registration area for 3 days
- Banquet space to accommodate up to 300 people
- NOTE: All the above room requirements are simultaneous in use.

Exhibits

Vendors are an integral and important part of every Chapter Conference. Typically the Conference must allow for 50 to 60 exhibit booths, 10' X 8', piped and draped and in one room if at all possible. During the Conference, exclusive exhibit hours must be provided both morning and afternoon. There are to be NO competing events during these hours.

Program

Educational Tracks are held for 2 days at a minimum. The presentations are carefully selected to provide up to date information to the communications personnel and typically there are 2 or 3 simultaneous tracks being presented. Tracks are typically 45-50 minutes in length and if there is a “Super Session”, it could be as long as 1-1/2 to 2 hours in length.

COMMITTEES

The overall success of the conference rests with the Conference Chair. This position is the singular most important committee position. It is the Conference Chair’s responsibility to appoint the various committee chairs. Choose the Committee Chairs carefully. Appoint people who are dependable. Be sure each person knows what is expected. Keep in close touch with them regularly by electronic means, mail and by face-to-face meetings as often as can be arranged. An active e-mail account should be required of each Committee Chair and encouraged of each Committee Member. In addition, all communications should go to ALL committee chairs. In this way, everyone on the committee knows what everyone is doing. It will make everyone’s job a lot easier and will help provide a successful conference.

**THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE IS ADVANCE PLANNING FOLLOWED BY
TIMELY ACTION TO CARRY OUT THOSE PLANS.**

Conference Chair

First, appoint the Committee Chairs. The success of the Conference will depend heavily upon the individuals chosen; so choose them carefully! Decision-making will be easier if the committee members are kept to a minimum number of individuals, and located (geographically) close enough to meet regularly.

It is the responsibility of the Conference Chair to submit a Conference Budget to the Chapter Board of Officers via the Chapter President. It is IMPERITIVE that the Conference Chair maintain accurate and detailed records of all income and expenses on a current basis and update the Board of Officers on a monthly basis.

Each committee must develop a budget as early as possible. These individual budgets will be included in the master budget maintained by the Conference Chair. Previous conference budget information can be obtained from the previous Conference Chair to assist in this endeavor. The budget will usually change as the planning progresses, but it is an important tool that will be beneficial throughout the process.

The Conference Chair must submit any and all contracts to the Chapter President for approval and authorization. NOTE: The Chapter President is the only person authorized to sign any contract that commits Chapter Funds!

Program Chair

The scheduling of events for the program is a joint responsibility of the Program and Conference Committees. This involves a significant amount of detail regarding the program including the opening breakfast if one is planned; the principal speakers, closing banquet if any, panels, and related functions. There is considerable latitude for the Program Chair to choose events provided the work is done in close alliance with the Conference Chair.

It may be more effective to have operational and technical subcommittees or co-chairs to coordinate development of the programs. Two main concerns are those of getting the program together and printed on time and getting the Call for Papers out on schedule.

Here are a few program considerations:

- Try to have a key event each day that is of interest to the whole quorum. Recent disaster situations (and how public safety agencies responded to them) draw good attendance.
- Try to key in a main event each morning and each afternoon.
- Don't forget to make time available for reports from Association Officers and the Executive Director if they are in attendance.
- The Conference schedule should allow for exclusive exhibit hours. On program days, there should be at least **three hours of exclusive exhibit time**. This exclusive time could be divided into 1.5 hours in the morning and 1.5 hours in the afternoon. Except for the requirements for exclusive hours, this guideline is subject to variation based on local vendors and attendee preferences.
- A host Chapter representative should be assigned to monitor equipment needs and to handle introductions and "thank you" for each presentation. In addition, shortly after each speaker starts, the representative should take a count of the attendance. These numbers shall be tabulated and reported to the Program Chair.
- Submit articles to APCO Bulletin about the Chapter Conference; accentuate the facilities and program. Highlight known speakers. Work with the Publicity Committee, the Member and Chapter Services Committee for inclusion in their monthly report to chapters, the Chapter Newsletter and the local press. Have advance copies of speeches available for the Press if necessary. Make sure that the chapter web page is continually updated with the latest conference information such as the program, speakers, exhibitors etc.
- Make sure that anyone who is responsible for introductions has the proper information available.
- Present a balanced program. Encourage commercial presentations of companies who are active in ALL aspects of the association if possible. Seek presentations of current interest.

- **Remember that the APCO member must often justify the value of attending the Conference to their supervisor.** It is the content of the program that makes the decision. The earlier there is solid, specific program information in the hands of the attendees, the easier it will be for them to get travel authorizations. **DO NOT over emphasize social events.**
- Be careful to have presenters' name or title or subject matter listed and spelled correctly in the program, proofread carefully. Be consistent in listing titles and names.
- Certificates should be given for workshop attendance to encourage participation in the training sessions.

Once the events and speakers are known, the Program Chair has the responsibility of contacting the speakers, presenters, panel members, etc. to obtain their biographies, arrival time, a/v needs, and any other necessary information. Program participants are told when and where they will make their presentations. Advise the presenters to bring the appropriate amount of handouts or assist them in reproducing them onsite — (could be a significant expense so have it available but don't publicize it!).

Once a speaker or panelist has accepted an invitation, follow up to ascertain what special equipment and seating arrangements they may need. Theater style seating will be used for most presentations

Stay in touch with presenters prior to the Conference. Ask them to contact the Committee upon arrival. Meet them and find out how to contact them during the Conference.

An adequate number of well-trained volunteers are essential to the success of the conference program. Volunteers should introduce speakers, disseminate and collect session evaluations, provide directions to classrooms, answer questions about program schedule, and assist speakers with AV set-up if necessary. Consider how volunteers will be trained and briefed on daily changes, ways to recognize/reward volunteers for service, and possible incentives to serve as volunteers.

General Arrangements Chair

The members of this Committee are the "nuts and bolts" of the Conference. Everything they do has an effect on the other Committees, and vice versa.

As the Chair of this Committee, you have an important job. The following is a list of suggested duties some of which may be assumed by the General Arrangements Committee members:

- Organize audio/visual facilities and coordinate these needs with the Chair of the Program Committee and the audio/visual contractor.
- Make provisions for and check PA systems in meeting rooms.

- Provide two-way and paging capabilities for key members of the Conference Committee and Association Officers and authorized staff members.
- Coordinate catering regarding meal menus, number of plates per event, decorations, seating at head table.
- Arrange for transportation for VIP's.
- Coordinate Chapter meeting and Conference Opening as well as the Exhibits Opening Ceremony. Arrange for signage outside exhibit area.
- Consider printing general area information in conference program guide, and be prepared to provide directions to nearby photocopy facilities, drug store, market, etc.
- Work with other Committees to respond to last minutes emergencies, e.g. speakers/VIPs with lost luggage containing handouts, etc.

General Comments:

At the end of each day, see that meeting rooms for the next day are in order, including meal requirements. Verify that the seating and table arrangements are as previously ordered and that they are appropriate for the type of requirements with lecturers and moderators. Be prepared for last minute changes in room assignments.

Provide professional looking signs which can be easily moved around and/or removed from doors and corridors.

Review meal functions that were planned earlier. Amendments may be necessary. Make main meal function estimates on the basis of the number of Conference registrants. Most hotels now have computer systems that can advise of the number of daily checkouts by Conference name. Work with the hotel management on this. .

Most hotels don't require meal guarantees more than 24 hours before the event, but some require as much as 72. Make sure you understand your facility's catering deadlines. Possible meal functions to be planned are:

- A "Tired Traveler's" hospitality event on the night before the Conference officially opens usually can be sponsored by vendors.
- Optional Opening Breakfast
- Optional Social Event
- Optional Conference Banquet

Provide the Conference Chair with a detailed budget. Use budgets obtained from the Chapter Conference Steering Committee files if necessary.

Some other things that may not have been thought of are:

- Rubber Stamps for:
Conference logo (2)
"For the deposit of APCO "XXX" Regional Conference only" Conference name and address
PAID Stamp
- Receipts in duplicate
- Signs for:
Registration, including Exhibitor Registration, Pre-registration, On Site registration
Conference Headquarters
Speakers' preparation room
- Verify the name the Chapter Conference is listed under with the hotel(s) you are using,
- Select design for stationary and envelopes. How will they be stamped and sealed during mail-outs? Order stationary as soon as logos, dates, etc. are available. The type and amount of material may determine the size of some envelopes. There should be enough envelopes for three mailings in addition to regular Conference correspondence.
- The General Arrangements Committee will locate a poster or corkboard with pins, adjacent to the Registration Desk, for the purpose of posting information or individual messages. This Information/Message Center will be operated by the registration desk staff that has easy access to the Conference communications systems (paging, two-way, and/or telephone).
- One of the more important contributions that can be made by the General Arrangements Committee is that of working with the hotel registration desk in efforts to determine how many people are registered each day. It is on this basis that much of the meal, function room costs and transportation planning is done.

Registration Chair

The first Committee members to meet the Conference guests will be those at registration. The impression made there will be a lasting one. The Chair should frequently be present and ready to assist in any way.

Work closely with the General Arrangements Committee to have the necessary tools: cash boxes, computers, name badges, holders, ribbons, etc.

Realize that there are two registration areas, one for the general membership, and one for the exhibitors. Try to locate the exhibitor registration area near the exhibit area. The desk can also be used as an operating center for the Exhibits Committee.

It is a good idea to allow for a reduced rate for full Conference registrations, which are received and paid at least one month before the opening day. This encourages pre-registration which allows all of the committees to better estimate the attendance and prepare for it. It also allows for badges to be pre-printed and to speed up the lines at the registration desk. The mailings should state that the pre-registration discount would apply only to prepaid registrations and not to those without payment. Be prepared to bill agencies for registration fees. It should be noted that purchase orders, vouchers and other types of agency post-Conference billing would delay the payment process.

Consideration should be given to requiring advance registration. The benefits would be:

- Better attendance indicators for meal planning and social events
- More accurate indicators for financial planning for the Conference
- More efficient registration process at Conference site eliminating excessive delays, long lines, confusion and paper shuffling,

Have lines for those who are pre-registered, for the exhibitors, day passes, and new registrants. Have registration packets for the pre-registrants and the Association Officers ready in a separate place at the desks.

It is customary to provide complimentary full registration for the Association Officers and APCO staff. Complimentary registrations for speakers and VIPs are at the discretion of the Conference Committee. Life Members of the Association in attendance shall also be offered complimentary registrations for them and their spouse.

Day passes need to be color-coded by day or date stamped. It is wise to write the day pass attendee's name on the pass when issued to eliminate them passing it to unpaid attendees.

The Conference program will include the opening and closing times of the Registration area, Registration hours should be extended (Noon to 7:00 P.M.) on the day prior to the first Conference session to avoid the rush at 8:00 A.M. on the morning of the opening breakfast. Registration should be open from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. on the first day of the Conference with extra staff so that meal breaks can be arranged without closing the registration desk. If this cannot be done, it is recommended that the registration desk be closed for the lunch hour to allow workers to eat.

Accommodate early and late registration if possible, or if a line is still standing at closing time, continue registration.

Have a firm and clear refund policy. Refunds should not be given for unattended events. Pre-registration discounts are for the whole package, not for each event.

The registration area needs lots of room. Make it easy to take the money and give out information. Have copies of the program handy and know what's in them.

Secure registration funds at the end of each day.

Know where clerical and reproduction facilities are, either in or near the hotel.

Some of the items necessary at the registration desk are:

- Registration forms
- Computer terminals and printers (at least two each) for entering/checking registrations and printing nametags.
- Cash boxes and change
- Books of tickets
- Rubber stamps, stamp pads
- Day passes
- Pens, pencils, markers, scratch pads, tape
- Calculators
- Receipts in duplicate

Exhibits Chair

The Exhibits Chair is responsible for contacting exhibitors, selling them booth space, and attending to their needs both prior to and during the Conference. Exhibits are a very important element of a Conference and a significant source of revenue; therefore, the Exhibits Chair should be among those who attend the preceding Chapter Conference in order to better learn this important job.

Although each state committee is encouraged to be unique and innovative in presenting a Conference, the sale, set up, and display requirements for exhibit booth spaces should be consistent for all Atlantic Chapter Conferences. It is the intent of the Association, and its Commercial members, that exhibits be an integral part of all chapter conferences. Exhibit booth locations are assigned on a first come basis. This encourages exhibitors to get there contracts and deposits in early in order to get the “choice” locations.

The Exhibitor's Packet should include an accurate diagram showing numbered booth spaces, entry/exit doors, aisles, etc. This makes it easier for vendors to make informed booth selections. Be ready to tell them which booth spaces are already sold and/or reserved. Some vendors may be concerned about who the neighboring booths are sold to. They may prefer not to be set up right next to their primary competitor for example. Ask for product information on form.

Exhibitors will be concerned about the number, length and quality of the exhibit hours that will be allotted in the Conference program and should be guaranteed at least three-hours exclusive time when there are no competing events scheduled on the program. This dedicated time can be divided up in a block during the morning and afternoon, or spread over two days. These times are especially productive for exhibitors and attendees. **Off-site product demonstrations, VIP seminars, by invitation-only meetings and other such commercial demonstrations planned for off the exhibit floor should not be allowed during the regular exhibit hours or during any Chapter business meeting or Chapter sponsored general membership event without the express permission of the Conference Chair.**

Work closely with the Conference Chair and Program Chair to ensure that these commitments

are allowed and honored. Include this commitment in the Exhibitor's Packet. Stated hours must be arranged for set up and teardown. It should be clearly stated that there will not be any early booth teardown without a penalty,. Early teardowns have a devastating domino effect that will disrupt the exhibit area.

It is recommended all vendor registration should be done in advance **with full payment required prior to set up to minimize no-shows.**

An important task is obtaining layouts of the exhibit area from the host property. These will be used in the Exhibitor's Packet in charting space sales, and in advertising sales. Also, the Registration and General Arrangements Committees need this information in order to locate registration desks, post direction signs, etc.

It is best if the registration desk for the exhibitors is located away from the main registration desk, preferably near the exhibit area, so day passes can be handled and checked easier. This desk can also be used as the operating center for security and the drayage and decorating people can locate Conference committee persons easier. In dealing with the drayage people and the host property, find out early the house rules for labor charges, etc. It is sometimes necessary for exhibitors to move their products around in the host property, in other cases, union labor is required and exhibitors will be prohibited from doing so.

Most host properties have storage space to hold the vendor exhibit materials until the vendors arrive. Drayage companies have the same capability.

Compare charges for storage, insurance and security issues. Determine all exhibit floor service charges. This information should be included in the Exhibitors Packet.

Host properties usually have a preferred or exclusive drayage company and decorator. Ask why. Usually it is an advantage to use someone who is familiar with the property layout. Decorators will probably have a copy of the host property exhibit area with booths sketched in and numbered,

Only the Conference and Exhibits Chairs are authorized to make changes in the booth layouts. **Do not permit host properties, decorators, drayage, etc. to make changes without proper authorization.**

The previous Chapter Conference Exhibitor Brochure can be a guide. Remember, the vendors are providing a large portion of the revenue for the Conference and a successful Conference depends significantly on this Committee.

Should any exhibitor violate other exhibitors' integrity or perform acts of unethical behavior by their respective employees, the Atlantic Chapter of APCO shall reserve the right to remove the offending exhibitor and notify APCO International who may withdraw a percentage of booth points from the violating exhibitor. The percentage depends on the severity of the issue decided upon by APCO International and the Atlantic Chapter.

It is recommended that early payment be required when selling booth spaces, This cash will be needed for other pre-Conference expenses. Vendors expect this and will normally mail their checks in to reserve space. Let them know that their requested booth space will be sold to others on the waiting list if payment is not received prior to the deadline. Deadlines for receipt of deposits and final payments must be published and receipt of final payment are effective ways to stimulate interest and compliance.

Make prompt reply upon receipt of a properly requested exhibit reservation to confirm the booth number(s) sold. **Do not allow any vendor to move into a booth space unless their payment has been received.**

Here are a few exhibitor considerations:

- Assist vendors, drayage, and decorator in setting up the exhibit area. If there are no vending machines in the area, set up a coffee break table for them on this day.
- Be alert for such things as uneven room lighting causing various booths to be "highlighted" at the expense of others. Have the facilities or decorator personnel correct problems such as blocked signs, prior to the opening of the exhibits area.
- The Grand Opening for the exhibit area will need ribbon and huge scissors. Work with the General Arrangements Committee in planning this ceremony and its details.
- Make sure exhibit hours will allow for maximum attendance and interest by attendees. Encourage activity in the exhibits area by offering finger foods, holding drawings, etc.. Encourage the Conference attendees to visit the exhibits area whenever announcements are being made.
- Monitor the exhibit area. The Corporate Advisory representative for the Atlantic Chapter may be able to assist in this. Utilize the Chapter CCAM and keep him involved with the vendors on exhibit issues.
- There will be other areas of activity, such as expanded exhibit times during some days. Special events which include refreshments may be held in the exhibit hall to encourage attendance.
- Walk the exhibit area during the last hour and do not allow any vendors to tear down and leave early. This will have a snowball effect among the vendors and will discourage the Conference attendees from visiting the other booths.
- Be on hand for the booth teardown.

- Final wrap up. See that the area is clear. Go over final billings with decorator, Drayage Company, etc.
- Vendors with any unforeseen problems such as delayed equipment arrival/pickup, additional equipment needs, and general assistance.

Entertainment Chair

The emphasis on entertainment should be on quality rather than quantity. It's better to have one good act than several mediocre ones. Work with the host properties for suggestions.

Book the banquet night entertainment (if applicable) at least eight to nine months in advance as entertainers make bookings far ahead. Require auditions, or visit the acts if they are performing in the area. Go over the contracts carefully and be sure everything is understood.

Publicity Chair

The Chair must work to advertise, guide, promote and, inform others about the Conference. Concentrate on publicity.

Work closely with all the other Committees. Send information and stories about Chapter Conference planned activities to the Chapter Webmaster for inclusion with the “on-line” information. Be sure to inform the APCO International Public Safety Communications/APCO BULLETIN editor. Conference Material for the magazine has to be submitted a minimum of two months prior to the planned mailing date. The first publicity mailing made 100 days prior to the Conference will have greater impact if it can be accompanied by an article in the corresponding magazine.

Here are a few publicity/ public relations considerations:

- Work with the Registration and General Arrangements committees in designing conference forms, letterhead, tickets, day passes, programs, signs, layouts, publications and rubber stamps.
- Pre-Conference publicity should begin at least one-year prior to the conference.
- Conference publicity: press coverage, tables, literature, interviews, releases, etc. Arrange interviews for local media with VIP speakers or attendees.
- Post-Conference publicity: Work with the magazine editor on information and photographs for post Conference publicity.
- Information service during registrations and throughout the Conference.

Volunteer Chair

The volunteer chair is responsible for obtaining a number of volunteers to be used during the conference. Normally you try to use them in 4 hour blocks. If they want to work longer, don't discourage them. You need a group to assist in many ways. The registration area, meeting rooms, door monitors, speaker room monitor, and ticket collectors are just a few of the needs that need to be met.

It is important that the attendance at the technical tracks is kept and recorded as this

information is used by future conference chairs.

The registration form for the conference is a good starting point for obtaining the volunteers. A separate line indicating their willingness to volunteer should be included on the form. The registration chair should keep the volunteer chair advised as they get the responses.

One volunteer that is familiar with audio/visual equipment should be on site at all times during the educational tracks. Whether this is a hotel employee, an A/V company employee or a chapter volunteer it is a requirement! All too often a bulb goes out or there is an equipment malfunction. When this happens, repairs need to be made without delay!