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ASIS International History

Alexandria, Va. – Founded in 1955, ASIS International today represents more than 37,000 security professionals around the world.

The post-World War II international climate featured the Cold War and Communism. Civil defense was a major national initiative. By the 1950s, a rash of new security products had been introduced. Many technologies that started as classified projects for the military moved to the nonclassified side of government and then into industry. It was in this atmosphere that the American Society for Industrial Security was conceived.

Paul Hansen, director of industrial security at Reynolds Metals Co., in Richmond, Va., saw the need in the early 1950s for a national association that would unite security practitioners and become a focal point for security education, research and professional development. With the support of fellow members of the Special Security Group, an informal alliance of 17 men who were security directors or managers from large corporations in the eastern United States, ASIS became a reality in January 1955. Hansen was the organization's first president; offices were established in Washington, D.C.

The Society's first magazine, a member benefit, launched in July 1957. The premiere issue of Industrial Security included a dedication by ASIS President Russ White, four feature articles, a preview of the next convention and a column written by Virginia Egelston, staff secretary at ASIS headquarters. Six advertisers purchased space.

By the end of the 1950s, ASIS claimed more than 1,000 members and 32 chapters around the country. The first international chapter, Europe, was chartered in December 1959.

Membership Snapshot, 1960s

The June 1967 issue of Industrial Security reported on a member survey that had been taken earlier that year. The average ASIS member was 46 years old and had been a member for five years. Forty-two percent had graduated from college, 18 percent held graduate degrees and 49 percent had taken special security courses. Thirty-seven percent indicated their salaries were about \$25,000 a year, with the average salary at \$13,923.

In response to a question on job titles, 42 different titles were given, with director of security & safety, security officer and corporate security officer as the top three. Two questions solicited details on the corporate positioning of security in 1967. The first asked to whom the head of security reported. Of those who answered, 44 percent said the head of security reported to the president (top official) or vice president of the company.

That '70s Decade

In 1972, Industrial Security magazine became [Security Management](#). The Annual Seminar and Exhibits grew during the 1970s, drawing attendees to Boston, Chicago, New York, New Orleans, Washington, Denver, Orlando, Los Angeles and Detroit. The 1975 Seminar in Denver was the first held at a convention center.

The Certified Protection Professional (CPP) designation was launched in 1977. The first certification exam followed the 1978 ASIS Annual Seminar and Exhibits in Los Angeles; 47 candidates sat for the test. By the end of the 1970s, [membership](#) topped 12,000. Fifty-six new [chapters](#) were chartered, including nine international chapters. Emphasizing the networking benefits of being part of an association, E.J. Criscuoli Jr., the ASIS 1975-1976 chairman of the board said, “Without chapters, all you have is a loose federation of individuals.”

The 1980s: A Decade of Growth

Major changes in security technology in the 1980s happened because of microprocessors. The CCTV, access control and alarm industries saw key changes due to advances in computer technology.

Nearly 2,000 people attended the Annual Seminar and Exhibits in 1980; 220 booths featured the latest products and services.

Fifty-seven chapters, including 12 outside the United States, were chartered in the 1980s, bringing the total to 195 by the end of the decade. To keep the chapters manageable and to improve accessibility for members, new chapters spun off established ones.

During this time, it was determined that CPPs should be recertified to remain current in the field. To remain certified, all CPPs were required to recertify after three years by accumulating additional professional credits. Credits could be earned in a number of ways, such as serving in a voluntary capacity for a security organization, speaking at a security seminar or publishing articles in a security publication. By the end of the decade, 3,500 security professionals had attained the CPP. The recertification rate was close to 90 percent.

The ASIS Annual Seminar and Exhibits tripled in size during the 1980s. The first, held in Miami Beach, featured 33 educational sessions and 220 booths. Nine years later, the annual event in Nashville offered 84 educational sessions and 747 exhibit booths.

In 1983, ASIS headquarters moved from downtown Washington to nearby Arlington, Va., nearly doubling the office space. That same year, the word “International” was added to the ASIS logo.

The '90s: More Expansion

Of the 34 ASIS chapters formed in the 1990s, 22 of them were outside the United States. Chapter programs kept pace with the security concerns of the day. Chapters from California to Florida heard about the rise in gang violence. Chapters explored VIP security following the 1993 kidnapping of a manufacturing executive. At least one chapter arranged for a briefing on Y2K issues.

ASIS committees and councils expanded in the 1990s, both in number and in scope. Subcommittees or ad hoc committees became permanent, and new councils that addressed emerging trends in security management formed.

In the early '90s, record numbers of candidates were sitting for the CPP exam. The Professional Certification Board continued to promote the value of the CPP to members and employers. The first international test sites included England, Canada and South Africa. By the end of the decade, tests had been conducted in Hong Kong, Singapore, Bahrain, Australia and New Zealand. In 1998, the test was translated into Spanish.

Construction on a new ASIS headquarters building in Alexandria, Va., began in 1997; the grand opening was celebrated in 1998.

The New Millennium

According to a 2000 ASIS Employment Survey, 55 percent of ASIS members came into the profession after a career in public or military law enforcement, and those in charge of security for multinational organizations were earning an average annual salary of \$105,000. A significant number of respondents reported spending time overseeing executive protection (41 percent), information security (34 percent) and computer security (23 percent).

Sept. 11, 2001 changed many things. Several ASIS management initiatives early in the decade set the course for new directions, including expanding strategic planning, new global strategies, an enhanced role for advocacy, and establishing [standards and guidelines](#).

In 2002, ASIS officially changed its name to ASIS International. The ASIS Board of Directors adopted a new logo that symbolized inclusiveness, along with the tag line “Advancing Security Worldwide.”

Two new certifications, the Professional Certified Investigator (PCI) and the Physical Security Professional (PSP) were introduced in 2003. Because of the high quality of the CPP, the PSP and the PCI designations, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security awarded its SAFETY ACT certification to ASIS. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the U.S. member of the International Organization for Standardization, awarded accreditation in 2007. The prestigious endorsement confirmed that ASIS’ [international certification programs \(CPP, PCI and PSP\)](#) adhere to the highest professional standards. The CPP exam is administered in 30 countries around the world.

The 53rd [Annual Seminar and Exhibits](#), held in Las Vegas in 2007, was the largest ever, with nearly 24,000 security professionals from around the world in attendance. The exhibit floor featured 2,753 booths representing 925 companies showcasing the latest innovations, technologies and services.

ASIS continues to offer a broad array of training programs to keep security professionals abreast of industry changes. [Educational programs](#) include national and international conferences, regional workshops, online degree programs, virtual forums, review courses and much more.

Programs, designed specifically for security professionals, consider every career stage and provide excellent networking opportunities through a broad range of courses with top-rate faculty. The ASIS International 54th Annual Seminar and Exhibits was held in Atlanta in 2008.

The [CSO Roundtable](#) was made its own membership organization in 2008 to win recognition for and enhance the standing of the CSO position; to assist CSOs in job performance, leadership and professional development; and to develop the next generation of corporate CSOs. It fulfills this mission by creating networking opportunities, holding high-level conferences, and offering a password-protected Web site that delivers a discussion blog, a library of policies and procedures, free resources, and tools provided by partners; CSO-relevant news; and a private-messaging function.

By February 2009, ASIS logged more than 37,000 members.

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