

*From FirstNet General Manager Bill D'Agostino*

The IWCE Conference continues today, with a number of opportunities to learn about the value and progress of FirstNet. This is my first time attending IWCE, and so far it has lived up to expectations, and then some.

I have enjoyed spending much of my time here meeting with members of the public safety community, as well as listening to panels, speakers, and break-out discussions featuring the best and brightest from the states, localities, Federal government and private sector. IWCE is unique in that it is a "one-stop shop" for all things public safety communications, and FirstNet looks forward to participating in next year's conference and beyond.

Yesterday I had the honor of delivering the keynote presentation with my Deputy, TJ Kennedy, who did an outstanding job at describing how a national public safety broadband network will improve responder communications and awareness during all types of emergency situations. Both TJ and I emphasized FirstNet's ongoing commitment to partnering, outreach, planning, and innovation. My remarks are now available on the website if you would like to review them.

I also spent some time on Wednesday afternoon touring the exhibit floor and came away very impressed with the high level of energy and innovation on display. I was encouraged to see so many real-use cases and products that apply to public safety from well-known vendors as well as new market entrants. It was promising to see more interest from manufacturers to integrate Band Class 14 into their devices. That will be critical for the adoption and the success of the national network.

Looking back on the events of this week, it is difficult to pinpoint one product or one presentation that stood out – for example, I heard some great ideas on potential partnership strategies for FirstNet and had a chance to try out cutting-edge communications devices. Everyone has brought their "A" game to IWCE, and it has been a tremendous learning opportunity for all of us.

There was one statement that stuck with me, however, and it came from the Oregon State Single Point of Contact Steve Noel, who encouraged everyone to "think outside the box." Steve said building the network was a "paradigm shift to how we do LMR systems today." Truer words have never been spoken -- a national interoperable broadband network has never been done before. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the private and public sectors to innovate together to bring public safety communications into the 21st century.

I look forward to sharing more updates with you soon.

Bill