FirstNet and Federal Departments and Agencies

WHAT IS THE FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY (FIRSTNET)?

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the 9/11 Commission recommended the establishment of a nationwide, interoperable public safety communications network to resolve communications challenges faced during emergencies.

FirstNet is an independent authority within the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration tasked with ensuring the building, deployment, and operation of the first nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband network. Established on February 22, 2012, with the passage of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act (P.L. 112-96) (the "Act"), FirstNet is governed by a 15-member Board consisting of the Attorney General of the United States, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and 12 members appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. The appointed members of the FirstNet Board have a broad range of skills, including Federal, State, or local public safety experience; technical expertise in broadband communications; network expertise in telecommunications; or financial expertise in financing and funding telecommunications networks.

WHAT WILL BE POSSIBLE WITH THE FIRSTNET NETWORK?

The FirstNet network will be built with the goal of enabling faster, more informed, and better coordinated responses to incidents and coverage of events. Just as smartphones have changed our personal lives, it is our goal for FirstNet devices and applications to ultimately change the way Federal agencies and other public safety entities operate. Imagine a day when one interoperable communications network can be used to dispatch and alert public safety personnel from different jurisdictions, including many levels of government, all at the same time. It is our goal for Federal subscribers and other public safety users of the FirstNet network to be able to share images and applications across multiple databases, allowing a common operational picture to develop as incidents unfold.

FirstNet's key goals are to meet the needs of public safety and to provide extensive coverage so federal subscribers and other public safety users can count on the network when they are on the job. FirstNet is also aiming to provide coverage solutions that let federal subscribers and other public safety users "take the network along" to the destination in certain geographies. Incident commanders and officials will have local control over the network so, for example, they can assign users and talk groups and determine who can access applications.

WHAT WILL BE POSSIBLE WITH THE FIRSTNET NETWORK? *(CONTINUED)*

When the FirstNet network launches, we plan for it to provide mission-critical, high-speed data services to supplement the voice capabilities of today's Land Mobile Radio (LMR) networks. Initially, the FirstNet network is intended to be used for sending data, video, images and text. The FirstNet network is also intended to carry location information and support streaming video. FirstNet plans to offer cellular voice communications such as Voice over Long Term Evolution (VoLTE) or other alternatives.

HOW CAN MY AGENCY PARTICIPATE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRSTNET NETWORK?

Under the Act, FirstNet is responsible for consulting with Federal, State, tribal, and local public safety entities to gather requirements for developing its network deployment plans[1]. Federal departments and agencies may participate in the development of the FirstNet network by:

- participating in the outreach efforts of the FirstNet Federal Outreach program;
- engaging in the coordination efforts of the Emergency Communications Preparedness Center (ECPC) that is managed by the Department of Homeland Security at http://www.dhs.gov/emergency-communications-preparedness-center;
- sharing user needs and the existence of available infrastructure assets with FirstNet's consultation staff; or
- becoming a "Cooperating Agency" in FirstNet's analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Federal personnel may also participate in internal organizations and working groups that are focused upon FirstNet and the development of a nationwide public safety broadband network.
To stay up-to-date on FirstNet State consultation activities, go to http://firstnet.gov/consultation.
Individuals may also track FirstNet's progress at www.firstnet.gov.

[1] This is not necessarily inclusive of all consultations that may be required by the Act.