



Courtesy photo

In this recent courtesy photo, Edward Parkinson joins New Mexico leaders and public safety officials for a demonstration of a compact rapid deployable – a small, trailered portable unit that is linked to FirstNet cellular and Wi-Fi coverage via satellite. Since CRDs do not use commercial power, they can easily operate in rural or remote areas or where communications may be temporarily unavailable.

FirstNet expansion almost complete

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GALLUP — An expansive broadband network made for public safety is nearly complete, the CEO of First Responder Network Authority said Tuesday.

CEO Edwin Parkinson, whose company has a partnership with AT&T to build out the network, was in New Mexico Tuesday to meet with local agencies and discuss progress on building the system.

Parkinson said FirstNet has put in more than 3 million

connections for more than 20,000 agencies, including the FBI and local police departments. He said the service is of particular importance to rural and tribal agencies.

He also said the rollout has been a real success, especially with the authority's use of compact rapid deployable units. The units are linked to FirstNet cellular and Wi-Fi coverage via satellite. Based on trailers, the units can be placed in remote areas or where internet may be temporarily unavailable.

Parkinson described them as "movable communication towers."

He said the next step is more personal technology that would be carried in a public safety vehicle and expand the network out beyond the vehicle's location.

The latest burst of expansion, Parkinson said, has included two towers in Yah-tah-hey, which have been operational since November.

Parkinson has been traveling the state to meet with public safety agencies and said that FirstNet Authority's senior management and board of directors are keen to engage clients on an ongoing basis.

"We have spent years working with public safety

agencies to understand their local needs and (gather) their input into the development and expansion of the network and will continue to do so," he said in a telephone interview.

FirstNet is a broadband network designed exclusively for firefighters, law enforcement, paramedics, and other first responders.

FirstNet says it's the country's only high-speed first responder broadband communications platform offering secure, reliable communications to emergency personnel in New Mexico and that it provides more than 2.71 million square miles of coverage.