FirstNet in action for law enforcement

FirstNet is the only nationwide public safety communications platform built with and for America’s first responders. Through a public-private partnership, AT&T and the First Responder Network Authority continually gather feedback from public safety to develop and enhance the network. FirstNet is bringing public safety a much-needed technology upgrade to help them connect to the critical information they need — every day and in every emergency. Here are success stories featuring the many ways law enforcement is using FirstNet to save lives and protect their communities.

Folsom Police Department, California – Situational Awareness

The Folsom Police Department uses an app running on FirstNet to better serve their community members with cognitive disabilities. Community members can sign up to carry an app-connected keychain fob with them. The beacon device sends out a signal to any Folsom police officer or firefighter who comes within 80 feet. The signal instantly activates a notification on the first responder’s FirstNet cell phone that provides the person’s name, condition, and de-escalation techniques to help the first responder interact with the individual. For example, the profile may suggest first responders ask the person about their dog and provide the name of the dog. For people who may be afraid to talk with police, the officer’s app can also display personalized video or audio messages from relatives to let their loved one know they are safe.

“When officers respond to a runaway person or violent subject call, I want them to have as much information about the person they are about to contact as possible. This app can quickly provide critical information to help calm a situation, allowing us to bring a runaway home or de-escalate a violent encounter without the use of force. It’s worth the investment.”

Chief Rick Hillman
Folsom Police Department

Seattle Police Department, Washington – Supporting People in Crisis

The Seattle Police Department uses an app to access individual care plans for people who regularly interact with the department. These care plans help officers do what is best for that person and may include diffusion strategies for a person in crisis or contact information of treatment providers. Officers use the agency bulletin system when an individual of concern interacts with the police or other services to maintain continuity with the department’s mental health division and quickly provide the right kind of support. This program increases officer and community safety.

“We can help serve people in need with individualized care plans and improve officer safety.”

Assistant Chief Adrian Diaz
Seattle Police Department
Arlington Police Department, Texas – Advanced Technology Capabilities

Connectivity is key for police officers with the Arlington Police Department in Texas. The city is one of the 50 most populous in the nation and is quickly growing. Police officers in Arlington face unique challenges, as the city is home to a large research university, professional sports teams, and several tourist attractions, and it is in close proximity to two other major cities. With access to information on-the-go, Arlington police officers can do their job more efficiently. The department rolled out FirstNet in 2018, using it for body-worn and in-car cameras. With Wi-Fi and cellular capabilities, the body-worn cameras are always connected. Priority and preemption on the network ensure bandwidth is available for officers to access the resources they need in the field on their smartphones.

“When we upgraded to FirstNet, we immediately got better service, whether it’s phone calls at the Dallas Cowboys’ AT&T Stadium, Six Flags over Texas or the Rangers’ Globe Life Park, or streaming drone footage from a critical incident.”

Research and Development Manager Brett Dove
Arlington Police Department

Cranford Police Department, New Jersey – FirstNet Push-to-Talk

FirstNet Push-to-Talk (PTT) — built on 3GPP mission-critical push-to-talk standards — provides a supplement to traditional land mobile radio systems, allowing officers to use their devices like a two-way radio. The Cranford Police Department participated in a test of the system for several months and experienced clear voice communications. FirstNet PTT gave Cranford officers the ability to remain connected during every incident, even when their traditional communications system failed. Officers also found that by using an LTE device for PTT, they were able to use Wi-Fi in buildings where radio systems may not penetrate. This kept officers connected in areas where communication has traditionally been limited.

“With FirstNet Push-to-Talk, you have encryption. You have support. You have the backend. You have everything you need to make sure that, when you need it, it’s going to work.”

Captain Guy Patterson
Cranford Police Department

Hillsdale County Sheriff’s Office, Michigan – Enhanced Coverage in Rural Areas

As a small agency serving a rural county in southern Michigan, reliable coverage and connectivity is critical for the Hillsdale County Sheriff’s Office. FirstNet-enabled smartphones and wearables have made deputies more efficient, allowing them to remain in the field to make follow-up calls, fill out reports, and attach crime scene photos to reports. Wearable smart watches also increase officer safety. With a push of a button, an “SOS” notification alerts dispatch that the deputy needs backup or assistance.

“FirstNet is moving us into the next generation of law enforcement. It’s a huge help for us and we’re able to keep up with the times with dependable technology.”

Lieutenant (ret.) Todd Moore
Hillsdale County Sheriff’s Office
Green Bay Police Department, Wisconsin – Asset Tracking

The Green Bay Police Department serves a city of 105,000. During football season, 81,000 football fans gather at the Green Bay Packer stadium, causing cellular congestion and preventing officers from using their phones — until they switched to FirstNet in 2019. Now on game day, officers use FirstNet to access operational plans, threat assessments, online ejection forms, stadium dispatch, and an ESRI tracker for officer location. FirstNet helps integrate this technology to keep everyone in these multi-jurisdictional events informed. The Green Bay Police Department also uses FirstNet in everyday operations. For example, they use a mugshot app to check IDs, a mapping app to access school floor plans and live video, and an online form to notify city leaders and command staff of severe weather.

“During the 2018 Green Bay Packers season, we tested some FirstNet devices and found the speed, messaging, and phone calls that we could actually make during even big plays. We decided the solution was definitely worth investing in.”

Commander Paul Ebel
Green Bay Police Department

Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office, California – FirstNet Supports Public Safety

The Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue (SCCSSR) team responds to approximately 25 requests for assistance each year, including wilderness and urban search and rescue responses, support for major community events, and rope rescues on steep slopes. When SCCSSR conducted a large-scale search and rescue exercise in a local county park with remote areas, FirstNet was on hand to ensure the participating agencies could communicate. A mobile cell tower and a Flying Cell on Wings (a tethered drone equipped with a cell site) broadcast mobile broadband across the immediate area, providing seamless connectivity.

“In remote areas of the county, communications have always been a challenge. And if we can’t communicate, we can’t see if our teams are safe or obtain the latest rescue status from those in the field. FirstNet is solving for this, giving us on-demand access to the connectivity we need when our community needs us the most.”

Technical Rescue Coordinator Rusty Wackermann
Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office

City of Bay Police Department and Craighead County Sheriff’s Office, Arkansas – Disaster Recovery

When an EF-3 tornado struck northeast Arkansas, it left a 12.5-mile-long path and major damage and destruction in its wake. FirstNet kept first responders with the City of Bay Police Department and Craighead County Sheriff’s Office connected. Even when one tower sustained damage during the storm, overlapping coverage from nearby towers provided reliable terrestrial coverage for FirstNet subscribers. Interoperability allowed the agencies to communicate with responding fire and emergency medical services personnel as they conducted damage assessment.

“After the tornado passed, [the area] was inundated with first responders from all over. My FirstNet service was never interrupted, no dropped calls or call failure, and the internet was spot on.”

Chief Paul Keith
City of Bay Police Department