# The Promise of FirstNet

## WHAT IS THE FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY (FIRSTNET)?

FirstNet is an independent authority within the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration. 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 FirstNet Board is composed of representatives from public safety; local, state and federal government; and the wireless industry.

Signed into law on February 22, 2012, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act created FirstNet. The law gives FirstNet the duty to build, operate and maintain the first high-speed, nationwide wireless broadband network dedicated to public safety entities. FirstNet will provide a single interoperable platform for public safety communications.

## WHAT WILL BE POSSIBLE WITH THE FIRSTNET NETWORK?

The FirstNet network will improve citizen and responder safety and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency response through cutting edge broadband communications. Imagine a day when a single communications network can be used to dispatch EMS personnel, a medical helicopter, police officers, and fire personnel from different jurisdictions all at the same time, utilizing voice, video, and data at broadband speeds.

Public safety personnel using the FirstNet network will be able to share applications, access databases, and provide better informed responses to incidents through integrated communications.

FirstNet's goal is to provide public safety-grade reliability and nationwide coverage so all public safety personnel can count on the network when they are on the job. FirstNet is also aiming to provide coverage solutions that let public safety "take the network along" to the destination in certain geographies. FirstNet will create a nationwide standard of service while affording localized customization and control.

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

## WHY WAS FIRSTNET CREATED?

The public safety community fought hard to fulfill the 9/11 Commission's last standing recommendation and lobbied Congress to pass legislation establishing a dedicated, reliable network for advanced data communications nationwide. During emergencies, public safety personnel need priority access and preemption, which are not available on commercial networks.

## HOW WILL THE FIRSTNET NETWORK BENEFIT PUBLIC SAFETY?

Using the FirstNet network will improve situational awareness, decision-making and responder and citizen health and safety. Just as smartphones have changed personal lives, FirstNet devices and applications will ultimately change the way public safety operates. FirstNet devices will work anywhere on the network and will save time when seconds matter. A market of millions of public safety users will bring savings opportunities to state and local budgets. FirstNet will bring the benefits of a single, nationwide, interoperable network that is built to open standards to public safety agencies across the country. With millions of users on a single network, FirstNet can take advantage of increased vendor competition and economies of scale to drive down the final cost to the public safety user.

## WHAT WILL USERS PAY FOR FIRSTNET'S SERVICES?

FirstNet intends to offer services at a compelling and competitive cost to attract millions of public safety users and make FirstNet self-sustaining. The use of FirstNet services and applications will be voluntary. The costs for FirstNet services and devices have not yet been set.

## HOW WILL STATES AND AGENCIES PARTICIPATE IN THE BUILDOUT OF FIRSTNET?

The law that established FirstNet requires it to consult with regional, state, tribal and local jurisdictions to ensure that the FirstNet network is designed to meet the needs of public safety across the country. State consultation will be a collaborative process, involving key stakeholders and leadership from each state and territory, and will be iterative to allow for enhancements and improvements from the state and territory. FirstNet will work through the designated single officer or governmental body during consultation to gather requirements from key stakeholders for developing its deployment plan. Additional information on state consultation is available at http://firstnet.gov/consultation.

**Questions in Massachusetts? Contact:**

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