

What is FirstNet?

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FirstNet is an independent authority within the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration. The law gives FirstNet the duty to ensure the building, deployment, and operation of the first nationwide public safety broadband network. FirstNet will provide a single interoperable platform for public safety communications.

The FirstNet network is intended to 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 by the 9-1-1 center 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. FirstNet's goal is for public safety personnel using the FirstNet network to be able to share applications, access databases, and provide better informed responses to incidents through integrated communications, using a single password while providing a network with reliability and coverage that meets the needs of public safety personnel when they are on the job.

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 is intended to be used for sending data, video, images and text. The FirstNet network is also intended to carry location information and eventually support streaming video. The FirstNet network will not become a viable replacement for LMR until the availability of mission-critical voice functionality that meets or exceeds the needs of public safety agencies.

FirstNet is responsible for ensuring the building of the network core. If a state decides to opt-in and accept FirstNet's state plan, FirstNet will pay to build out the state's radio access network (RAN) that will connect to the core. FirstNet will also be financially responsible for the network's operations and maintenance.

Use of the FirstNet network is voluntary, and no public safety agency is required to participate. However, a network built for and dedicated to public safety agencies should provide a dependable and affordable user experience making FirstNet network an attractive choice for first responders.

FirstNet intends to offer services at a compelling and competitive cost to attract millions of public safety users and make the FirstNet network self-sustaining. The costs for FirstNet's services and devices have not yet been set. FirstNet will be responsible for managing core operations and RAN operations for opt-in states. FirstNet also will enable robust identity management and authentication practices at the local level.