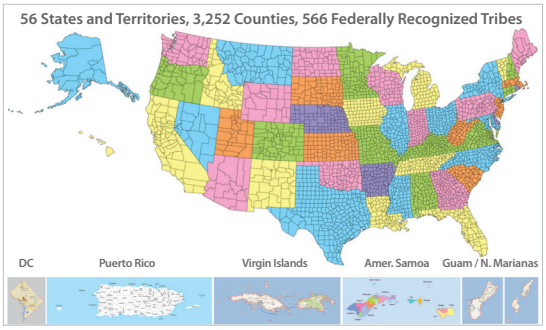
The Promise of FirstNet

What is FirstNet?

FirstNet will be the first high-speed wireless, broadband data network dedicated to public safety. FirstNet will be a single, nationwide network that facilitates communication for public safety users during emergencies and on the job every day. Think of FirstNet as a bigger, more reliable, secure and resilient "wireless pipe." This new network will be public safety-grade, providing access to applications and coverage where public safety needs it most.



What will be possible with FirstNet?

Initially FirstNet will be used to send data, video, images and text and make cellular-quality voice calls. Users will get fast access to information they need to meet their mission. Unlike commercial wireless networks, FirstNet will allow for priority access among public safety users. FirstNet will also give incident commanders and local officials control over the network so, for example, they can assign users and talk groups and determine who can access applications.

Why was FirstNet created?

After 9/11, the public safety community fought hard to fulfill the 9/11 Commission's last standing recommendation and convince Congress that it needed a dedicated, reliable network to provide advanced data communications capabilities nationwide. Commercial networks get overloaded or fail and don't provide priority access to public safety users during emergencies.

How will FirstNet benefit public safety?

Using FirstNet will improve situational awareness and decision-making. Just as smartphones have changed our personal lives, FirstNet devices and applications will ultimately change the way public safety operates. FirstNet will save time during emergencies when seconds count. FirstNet will save money for states by leveraging nationwide purchasing power and scale economies. Using FirstNet can help save lives, solve crimes and keep our communities and emergency responders safer.

How will states and agencies participate in the buildout of FirstNet?

To make FirstNet a nationwide network, all states must have a local radio access network (RAN) that connects to the FirstNet core. FirstNet is responsible for working through the designated state point of contact to consult with states, local communities, tribal governments and first responders to gather requirements for developing its RAN deployment plan. If the FirstNet plan is accepted by a state, FirstNet will construct the RAN. If a state prefers to build its own RAN, the state must secure FCC approval and may seek funding support from NTIA. State-built RANs must meet FirstNet security, hardening and interoperability requirements.

What will users pay for FirstNet 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.

WIRELESS BROADBAND, DEDICATED TO PUBLIC SAFETY

FirstNet™
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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