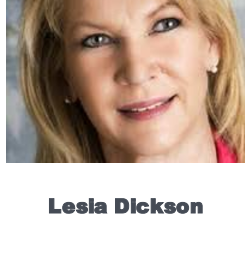




## FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY



**Lesia Dickson**

### ON MY MIND

This month, I attended the All Hazards Incident Management Teams Association (AHIMTA) Annual Conference in Hilton Head, SC. AHIMTA promotes, supports, and enhances the incident management profession by establishing standards and promoting cooperation within all government levels and across all responder types.

As a past speaker at AHIMTA, I always enjoy their operationally focused convention. Attendees are practitioners with years of experience representing all incident management team levels and Incident Command System (ICS) positions. If you want to hear response war stories, this is the place.

My goal for this year's conference was to hear what incident management team members and emergency managers were saying about FirstNet: our progress and our direction. What I heard was truly exciting.

First, most attendees understand FirstNet – a nationwide public safety broadband network dedicated to enhancing communications during response. In fact, many agencies are current FirstNet subscribers or in the process of subscribing.

Many attendees already use FirstNet's services through FirstNet's subscriber-paid program. As one attendee said, "Why wouldn't a public safety person use FirstNet? I saved money and I get priority along with it. Plus, my data speeds are great. Everyone in my department is talking about it!"

I also heard people express a desire for more operational information about FirstNet. Many acknowledged that FirstNet is only part of the solution – learning to use broadband more effectively for incident management is the other part of the equation. In other words, FirstNet can build public safety's network, but it's up to response organizations to use the network more efficiently. Bingo!

During the breakout sessions and plenaries, many IMT-related topics included mobile communications components – causing FirstNet to come up often. Location-based services and resource tracking are hot topics in the industry, and using FirstNet to run products more efficiently and reliably supercharges their response value. Meanwhile, apps have infiltrated everything – and they rely on mobility for timely and effective information. Field responders need priority to keep data flowing during network congestion. Once again, FirstNet's priority and preemption capabilities are game-changers for incident response.

Many discussions focused on the changing communication role within the ICS command structure. ICS Communications Unit (COMU) responsibilities are expanding to manage broadband data and IT functions and the COML/COMU function has been elevated within the ICS. This change signals the expanding importance of voice and data communications for Incident Management Teams.

Everyone wanted information about deployables. Will FirstNet really bring deployables to an incident? Is it really free – without satellite charges? FirstNet really commits to being on site in 14 hours or less?

I was happy to answer "yes!" to those questions, and to hear past deployable users answer "yes," too. One such individual is Captain **Easton Peterson** from Fairfax County, VA, who requested a FirstNet deployable for the Ellicott City floods.

"We had been on FirstNet for a few weeks and were one of the first FirstNet SatCOLT deployments in the nation, so we made a lot of mistakes. But FirstNet and AT&T were totally committed to working with us and have worked really hard for our business from day one."

We also heard some questions at AHIMTA about the FirstNet network. Coverage, build-out questions, misinformation, and customer service snafus have been challenging for some, but the overwhelming majority of IMT practitioners were excited about FirstNet's impact on incident management. One team leader said: "If it weren't for FirstNet, all of these carriers wouldn't be tripping over themselves to offer us priority now like they are. We just have to keep getting better at using the tools that we are getting."

I was grateful for the opportunity at AHIMTA to hear how to more closely align FirstNet to the incident responders' mission. If you have comments and ideas, I would love to hear from you. Drop me a line at [Lesia.Dickson@firstnet.gov](mailto:Lesia.Dickson@firstnet.gov).

*Lesia Dickson is Director, Northcentral Area - Public Safety Advocacy, First Responder Network Authority*

### WISHING PUBLIC SAFETY SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



### WHAT'S NEW AT FIRSTNET

#### FirstNet Quarterly Board Meeting

On Dec. 13, the FirstNet Board met in Tysons, VA, for its Quarterly Board Meeting. During the meeting, the Board:

- Welcomed new Board Chair **Edward Horowitz**, Vice Chair **Richard Stanek**, five new Board Members and PSAC Chair **Todd Early**
- Heard updates from First Responder Network Authority Leadership and the Board Committees, including a recap of 2018 and a look ahead at 2019
- Voted on resolutions to thank outgoing Board members
- Held an annual Board Committee performance evaluations and charter reviews
- Received updates from the PSAC and AT&T
- Provided CEO and strategy updates, including a discussion of the goal, mission, vision and objectives of the FirstNet Strategic Plan.

A [press release](#) and [webcast of the meeting](#) are available on [FirstNet.gov](#).

#### Popular Science Magazine names FirstNet Best of What's New for 2018



In its Nov. 27 issue, *Popular Science Magazine* noted that ambulances, fire trucks, and police cruisers can turn on their sirens to cut through traffic in an emergency, but the first responders' phones can still get jammed up. A FirstNet SIM card gives them the equivalent of flashing lights on a mobile network. [Read the article.](#)

#### Smart Cities Dive names FirstNet 2018 Technology of the Year



#### DIVE AWARDS

### Technology of the Year: FirstNet

*Smart Cities Dive* named FirstNet 2018's Technology of the Year. The award recognizes the top disruptors and innovators in smart cities, including leaders, groups and companies that are transforming urban life and shaping the future. [Read more.](#)

#### It's coming: Mission-Critical Push to Talk

By the second half of 2019, [AT&T plans to have its solutions fully compliant](#) with 3GPP Mission-Critical Push-to-Talk (MCPTT) standards. Push-to-Talk (PTT) applications are another tool in the tool box for public safety. Read more about [how first responders are using FirstNet with PTT capabilities](#) at large events like the Boston Marathon.

### WORTH A LOOK/LISTEN

#### Public Safety First podcast: The future of emergency management

In episode 12 of our *Public Safety First* podcast, I talked with **Wes Dison**, CIO of Communication and Technology for the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs.

We discussed the future of emergency management with mobile data and how FirstNet will benefit emergency managers nationwide.

Catch up on this or our other podcasts on [iTunes](#), [YouTube](#) or [SoundCloud](#).



#### On the FirstNet Blog: Highlights of our workshop with Guam

Nearly 80 public safety stakeholders gathered at the First Responder Network Authority's Agency Operations and Technology Workshop in Tamuning, Guam. The workshop focused on identifying the challenges of Guam's current public safety communications, and educating participants on how the FirstNet network would close those gaps. [Read about the workshop.](#)



#### On video: FirstNet supports Hurricane Florence disaster recovery

Whiteville was the first town in North Carolina to sign up for FirstNet. During Hurricane Florence, when everything was down, FirstNet was working to help with all things disaster recovery. [Watch the video.](#)



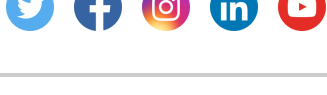
### LET'S CATCH UP

Our Emergency Management team is excited to talk with you. Look for us at:

- [CES 2019, Las Vegas, Jan. 8-11](#)
- [SEARCH 2019 Winter Membership Group Meeting, San Diego, Jan. 8](#)

For updates, make sure to visit [FirstNet.gov](#) and our social channels (click the icons below) regularly. Enjoy safe and happy holidays. See you in the New Year!

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