



**FirstNet**



# Connecting the frontlines during COVID-19 response

## How FirstNet supports public safety during emergencies

### FirstNet: America's Public Safety Network

The Department of Commerce's **First Responder Network Authority** (FirstNet Authority) has delivered a nationwide broadband network to America's first responders, helping them communicate, save lives and protect our communities. The network provides first responders with their own always-on, 24/7, 365 "fast lane" for voice and data communications.

#### SUPPORTING PUBLIC SAFETY RESPONSE TO COVID-19

FirstNet is helping communities respond to COVID-19 by supporting public safety communications across the country. Healthcare workers and first responders are using the FirstNet network to communicate and coordinate operations at COVID-19 testing centers, field hospitals, and incident command posts. The network allows them to maintain reliable communications when and where they need it most – even during surge situations where commercial networks can become congested – and interoperate with other first responders across federal, state, and local agencies. The network's fleet of dedicated deployable assets – more than 70 portable cell sites available 24/7 at no additional charge – has also been called upon to help public safety agencies.

- ✓ More than **50 FirstNet mobile cell sites** have been deployed for COVID-19 related emergencies.
- ✓ There are **more than 13,000 agencies** using more than **1.5 million connections** on FirstNet (as of April 2020).
- ✓ The response to COVID-19 led to increased network use. First responders **consumed more than 2 times as much data** as **AT&T commercial customers** from January to May 2020. This underscores the need and importance of having a network specifically built for public safety's demanding and lifesaving mission.

#### EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTERS AND HEALTHCARE SITES

- FirstNet is working closely with federal, state, local and tribal emergency operations centers (EOCs) to make sure the network addresses first responders' communication needs during COVID-19 response. **FirstNet is working with EOCs in every state and has deployed mobile cell site assets in states including Georgia, California, New York, and Connecticut.**
- FirstNet portable cell sites and other devices have been deployed at testing facilities to ensure reliable communications for when crowds arrive for testing. The nation's first **COVID-19 Dedicated Care Center in Boston** needed reliable communications fast to care for an influx of patients. Thousands of FirstNet Ready™ devices – including smartphones, MiFis and more – were delivered to help first responders test and treat patients.
- FirstNet provided connections for public safety and healthcare workers inside the **US Naval Ship Comfort** in New York harbor by providing kits to install FirstNet service on the ship, and a FirstNet cell tower on wheels was used to bolster emergency communications for workers at the **US Naval Ship Mercy** in Los Angeles.

## CONNECTING RURAL AND TRIBAL LOCATIONS

- To prepare for and meet the demand of caring for COVID-19 patients in rural California, FirstNet supported emergency communications in **Tulare County**, where a remote, makeshift hospital was set up at the Porterville Developmental Center. There, a portable FirstNet cell site was used to provide extra network coverage and capacity for public safety and healthcare workers in and around this critical healthcare facility. “With this support, our first responders and healthcare personnel will have the priority connectivity they need, when they need it.” – **Dennis Townsend, Tulare County (CA) Supervisor**
- The FirstNet Authority is actively working with tribal public safety agencies to support their unique communications needs and challenges for responding to COVID-19. FirstNet deployable assets have been deployed to multiple tribal areas to support communication needs where first responders need connectivity, including on the Navajo Nation. “We appreciate that FirstNet answered our call when we requested the deployable asset to provide critical connectivity for federal and tribal officials responding to the COVID-19 crisis.” – **Chris Becenti, Executive Director, Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office**

## KEEPING 9-1-1 DISPATCHERS CONNECTED

- Emergency Communications Centers are critical for an effective emergency response, taking calls for assistance from the public and directing first responders to emergencies. In the [City of Alexandria, Virginia](#), hotspots and smartphones powered by the FirstNet network are enabling 9-1-1 dispatchers to take calls and handle Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) operations from their homes and remote locations. “We didn’t want to rely on people’s home internet because we know they can lose connectivity. We know we won’t lose connectivity with FirstNet.” – **Renee Gordon, Director of Department of Emergency & Customer Communications (DECC), City of Alexandria, VA**

## COORDINATING MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE

- In Indiana, Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) medical supplies were received and distributed from a central location at Stout Field, Indiana Air National Guard Headquarters. Multiple state and local agencies came together to ensure that critical supplies reached local communities as quickly as possible. FirstNet provided seamless interoperability with the statewide radio system, which helped multi-agency communications and improved operations at Stout Field, Indiana Air National Guard Headquarters. “The Indiana State Department of Health team leading this effort carried either radios or cell phones – or both – and communication became quite difficult. We suggested they try FirstNet, and connected an existing LMR talkgroup to the FirstNet ePTT app. This solution really simplified and streamlined their communication process. They’re now FirstNet believers.” – **Kelly Dignin, Executive Director, Integrated Public Safety Commission**

# FirstNet: Connecting and Protecting Communities

While COVID-19 has been front and center for all of public safety, agencies have had to respond to other emergencies and incidents, and FirstNet has been there to assist. The network covers more than 99% of the U.S. population, making rural coverage a top priority, and is the only nationwide, high-speed broadband network that is dedicated to America’s first responders.

**Rural and Remote America** – FirstNet is bringing more connectivity and innovation to first responders operating in rural communities across the country. This includes adding rural coverage where it did not previously exist, such as the purpose-built FirstNet cell site on the [Red Cliff Reservation in Wisconsin](#).

**Telehealth** – Health facilities are increasingly using telehealth applications to treat patients from a distance, and these applications can be data intensive and have a low tolerance for latency or jitter. FirstNet provides the bandwidth and capacity that enables video and photos to be used for telehealth purposes. The data prioritization on FirstNet gives first responders and health workers a network that will be there when they need it most.

**Innovation** – FirstNet is enabling a growing ecosystem of devices and apps for public safety personnel. More than 100 apps have been tested for additional security and reliability and are identified for public safety’s use in the FirstNet App Catalog. Further, while consumers are using more apps to manage working from home and helping their children with distance learning, public safety agencies across the country are using the FirstNet App Catalog as they adjust and modify their response to COVID-19. In addition, the FirstNet Authority guides the future technology evolution of the network through its Roadmap and investments.