



Call to Action

IAFC Asks Fire Service to Urge Governors to “Opt-in” to FirstNet and Allow FirstNet and AT&T to Build Out Radio Access Network (RAN) in Each State and Territory

On September 8, 2016, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) adopted a position statement supporting the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) buildout of the nationwide broadband network. The Middle-Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-96) provided 20 MHz of spectrum in the 700 MHz band and \$7 billion to build a nationwide broadband network dedicated to the mission requirements of public safety. This legislation also created FirstNet, an independent authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. On March 30, 2017, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross announced that FirstNet awarded the nationwide public safety broadband network (NPSBN) contract to AT&T.

The IAFC believes that FirstNet, by providing dedicated, interoperable, mission-critical data communications, will enhance emergency response operations throughout the fire and emergency service for years to come. FirstNet will be a vital component for an effective tool for everyday response, natural disasters and to terrorist incidents. The Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission Report) identified the need for improved interoperable communications between first responders and recommended dedicated spectrum for public safety. These needs were again amplified and identified in the after-action reports of Hurricane Katrina and other incidents.

Fire chiefs and public safety fought hard to establish FirstNet because they know the network is urgently needed to increase the safety and capabilities of all public safety personnel and to protect the American people. The IAFC and public safety are united behind the desire to see FirstNet succeed and will continue to fight for public safety's access to the best available technology to keep the public safe.

The IAFC represents fire chiefs who have responded to numerous large-scale events including natural disasters and acts of terrorism, who know firsthand the benefits that the FirstNet network stands to offer in terms of improving communications, coordination and situational awareness during emergency response operations. FirstNet devices and applications will ultimately change the way local fire and EMS departments operate.

The ability of a single communication network to dispatch EMS and fire personnel, a medical helicopter and other emergency responders from different jurisdictions – all at

the same time while enabling video, text and data communications at broadband speeds – will save critical minutes when it matters most.

The IAFC has been a fierce supporter of FirstNet since its inception. Once built, emergency responders for the first time will have a nationwide, high-speed, broadband network dedicated to public safety. The network also will create innovative opportunities for EMS and the way we integrate into the healthcare system.

AT&T is a proven technology partner and will use its private sector expertise and best practices to focus on building and operating the nationwide network for public safety. AT&T is making a significant investment in public safety: \$40 billion over the 25-year life of the contract.

On June 19, FirstNet released the state plans. FirstNet will provide the governor of each state (or territory) with a notice of the completion of the request for proposal process; the details of the proposed plan; and the funding level for the state or territory. Upon receipt of the plan, a governor will have 90 days to choose whether to participate in the plan provided by FirstNet or conduct his/her own deployment of a radio access network (RAN). The governors can immediately opt-in if they do not have any issues with the state plans proposed by FirstNet.

If a governor decides to opt out, he/she is required to notify FirstNet, the National Telecommunications Information Agency, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). After providing the notification, the governor has 180 days to develop and complete requests for proposals for the construction, maintenance, and operation of the RAN within the state. The state will then be required to submit an alternative plan to the FCC that is interoperable with the NPSBN and complies with the minimum technical interoperability requirements under the act.

If a governor decides to opt-out and build a state's own RAN, this will undoubtedly delay the process of building out the RAN in his/her state and will ultimately delay the buildout of the NPSBN. States will assume all technical, operational, political, and financial risks and responsibilities related to building their own RAN for the next 25 years. There have been estimates that this could cause a delay of service by a minimum of two years. IAFC members should contact their FirstNet State Single Points of Contact (SPOC) to get up-to-date information about their specific state plans and provide input as their governors decide whether to opt-out of FirstNet. If the states allow FirstNet to build out the RAN in each state and territory this will result in the nationwide broadband network being built out in a much shorter time-frame.

We urge IAFC members and state fire chiefs associations to make their voices heard and participate in the process to recommend to governors that they should allow FirstNet to build out the RAN in the state and to not opt-out and build out their own RANs. If a governor decides to allow FirstNet to build out the network with AT&T this will accelerate the buildout of the network and provide public safety the needed broadband network. In

the interim, AT&T will provide immediate priority access to its existing network for emergency responders with priority immediately after a governor accepts the FirstNet plan. This will undoubtedly accelerate the buildout of the much-needed broadband network.

The IAFC Board of Directors unanimously supports the FirstNet award to AT&T and asks members to reach out to their governors to allow FirstNet and its partner AT&T to buildout the RAN in each state which will provide the expeditious buildout of the NPSBN. If a state opts out, it will not be able to obtain priority service coverage while the RAN is being built out and up to a two-year delay will materially slow down the buildout of the NPSBN.

This is a call to action to all IAFC members to:

1. Reach out to their state points of contact (SPOC) and participate in their state's process leading up to the governor's decision to opt-in and allow FirstNet to build out the RAN or opt-out and build its own RAN. The [list of SPOCs is on the FirstNet website](#).
2. Contact the governor requesting that he/she allow FirstNet to build out the RAN in his/her state. Point out that it is a low-risk option that will support faster delivery of services to the state's public safety community and help create an interoperable, highly secure, sustainable, nationwide network for public safety. If a governor chooses to opt-in, AT&T will deploy the state plan at zero deployment cost to the state.
3. Tell the governor if he/she decides to opt-out that the state will assume all technical, operational, political, and financial risks and responsibilities related to building its own RAN for the next 25 years. A decision to opt-out will cause a delay of service for estimates of up to two years.
4. Make sure the governor understands that if he/she allows FirstNet to buildout the RAN that one of the key benefits of the partnership will be the availability of priority services immediately after a governor makes the decision to opt-in to the network. This will be made available over the existing AT&T nationwide network and on all its long-term evolution (LTE) bands. This is only available to opt-in states.
5. Advise your SPOC that FirstNet's broadband network will open the door to the development of new public safety technologies. For example, Next-generation 911 which will improve public safety communications in a growing wireless mobile society. Also, indoor location, (including vertical axis) is an important consideration, both for finding victims in an emergency as well as for first

responder safety. Enhanced location was included as a key FirstNet objective, so the SPOC should be aware of this in finalizing their state plans.

Misleading information has been circulated which indicates that public safety users are not happy with FirstNet. This is not true. Most of public safety associations and their members fully support FirstNet. To suggest otherwise is irresponsible.

Another untruth being circulated is that governors can keep revenue from operation of their own state's RAN citing section 6302 (g) of the Middle-Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-96). This is fiction as well. No one from FirstNet has said that revenue cannot be used to operate, maintain, operate, or improve the RAN. However, a governor cannot operate its state RAN and take any excess revenue and use it for its general fund. The act is quite clear on this point. Congress may have sought to provide an option for a state to implement its own RAN in the furtherance of its goal to provide first responders with the network they require, but Congress certainly did not intend to create a new source of state revenue.

SUBMITTED BY: International Association of Fire Chiefs

ADOPTED BY THE IAFC BOARD OF DIRECTORS: July 24, 2017