Minnesota-FirstNet Consultation Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Questions and Answers

Q: What is FirstNet, the First Responder Network Authority and NPSBN?

A: FirstNet is the brand AT&T will use to distinguish their commercial network from their public safety network. AT&T owns the rights to this brand under the public/private partnership for the duration of the 25-year contract. AT&T is providing a separate public safety core to distinguish the networks.

The First Responder Network Authority (Authority) is similar to Minnesota’s Statewide Emergency Communications Board, except at a national level. The Authority is an independent entity within the US Department of Commerce and the US National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). It was created in 2013 to provide emergency responders with the first high-speed, nationwide cellular data network dedicated exclusively to public safety. The Authority has been obligated by Congress to take all actions necessary to ensure the building, deployment and operation of the nationwide public safety broadband network. They will hold the spectrum license for the NPSBN.

NPSBN means “Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network”. It is the nationwide public safety cellular data network that the federal government contracted with AT&T. It is a public/private partnership.

For more information on FirstNet, visit the following sites:

- Minnesota Public Safety Wireless Broadband Program website
- First Responder Network Authority website
- FirstNet “built with AT&T” website

Q: What were the main goals of the Minnesota FirstNet Consultation Project (MnFCP)?

A: MnFCP was a Statewide Emergency Communications Board-sponsored project. It prepared the State of Minnesota to consult with FirstNet and the Authority to collaboratively implement the NPSBN in the state.

The main goals of MnFCP were:

1. Collect the requirements of the first responder agencies; specifically, where you need the service and what it needs to support.
2. Prepare the state and its stakeholders for consultation with FirstNet.
3. Develop a sustainable financial plan.
Q: Can FirstNet charge fees to use the NPSBN network?
A: Yes. FirstNet intends to charge user fees to sustain the operations of the network.

Q: Who is this network for?
A: The NPSBN is for public safety users and qualified secondary users. “Public safety” includes all personnel whose sole or principle purpose is the protection of life, safety and property. The levels have been termed “primary” and “extended primary”. AT&T determines this categorization based on NAICS codes. The code can be determined [at this website](#).

Q: How are primary and extended primary users determined?
A: FirstNet is permitted to provide service to all first responder users, such as public utilities, public works, or other support entities public or private. AT&T determines the primary and extended primary categories by NAICS codes.

Q: Will the extended primary users affect public safety’s primary user access on the NPSBN network?
A: No. FirstNet intends to provide priority access to public safety users who are considered first responders; fire, law, and EMS based on the NAICS codes. The extended primary users will need to be temporarily up-lifted to primary if needed during a planned or unplanned event.

Q: If one subscribes with FirstNet, will it take the place of our current commercial carrier service (Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, etc.)?
A: Yes. FirstNet can become your cell service provider in place of your existing commercial carrier. FirstNet will be your cellular carrier, although subscribing to multiple cellular carrier services is becoming more common for public and private entities.

Q: Am I forced to adopt FirstNet services?
A: No. Subscribing to FirstNet services is voluntary. There is no federal or state mandate that would require you to adopt FirstNet’s service.

Q: I've heard that 5G is being developed. Will FirstNet keep pace with changes in technology?
A: Yes. By picking the international LTE standard maintained by the world-wide organization 3GPP, FirstNet is required to keep pace with the standard and commercial carriers such as Verizon, Sprint and AT&T.
Q: I have heard that the ultimate goal of FirstNet is to replace all of public safety communications, including radio networks. Is this true?

A: Not for the foreseeable future. Existing radio networks such as ARMER are expected to remain a valuable public safety communications tool for some time into the future; at least 10 to 20 years.

Q: It seems like we had a similar conversation 10 years ago with the ARMER network? How does the NPSBN and FirstNet differ from what was accomplished with ARMER and the Statewide Emergency Communications Board?

A: The NPSBN is similar to the ARMER project, with two major differences:

• It is nationwide versus statewide initiative, and
• It is a broadband data network versus a trunked radio network.

Q: What about the Federal agencies such as the National Guard. Will they become users on the FirstNet NPSBN network?

A: Yes. Public safety federal agencies such as the National Guard will be eligible users of the network.

Q: Is FirstNet working with the FBI with regard to the security requirement for NCIC and other secure databases?

A: Yes. The NPSBN will be fully secured and meet all FIPS requirements.

Q: What are the expected monthly usage costs?

A: FirstNet has stated in public meetings that the cost to the end user will be competitive with commercial carriers. The State of Minnesota maintains a cellular service contract with multiple cell carriers through their Cooperative Purchasing Venture Program (CPV). Learn more here.

Q: How much will building the network cost agencies?

A: AT&T is contractually obligated to build the network in exchange for start-up funding and the commercialization of band class 14 spectrum when not in use by first responders. FirstNet’s mission in federal statute is to build the network and offer service to agencies. AT&T’s business model is to build the network and charge fees for use similar to their commercial plans.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Q: What are the state's rights in this? Can they say no if it is too expensive?</th>
<th>A: Yes. There are no requirements to use AT&amp;T or FirstNet services.</th>
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<td>Q: You mentioned that FirstNet will roll out a network nationwide. Can we use the same device in different states?</td>
<td>A: Yes. The NPSBN is a single nationwide network.</td>
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<td>Q: Will FirstNet build a whole new infrastructure? What do they intend on leveraging?</td>
<td>A: AT&amp;T has offered their existing spectrum and commercial network, as well as the band class 14 spectrum acquired in the public/private partnership. This means the network is much further along in the development than a greenfield build.</td>
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<td>Q: Who made the FirstNet decisions for the State of Minnesota?</td>
<td>A: Gov. Mark Dayton opted-in to the FirstNet plan on October 4, 2017. The governor’s delegated single point of contact (SPOC) for FirstNet in Minnesota is the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Additionally, the Statewide Emergency Communications Board (SECB) has oversight authority for all public safety communications in the state and sponsored the MnFCP project. The Commissioner of DPS chairs the SECB.</td>
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<td>Q: How much local control will agencies be given over their own subscribers?</td>
<td>A: FirstNet is providing a public safety home page that will provide the features for local control for a subscribing agency.</td>
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<td>Q: When can we anticipate the deployment of the NPSBN?</td>
<td>A: The FirstNet public safety core was implemented on March 29, 2018. The service is available today.</td>
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Q: What would I use the network for? What kind of applications are going to be available?

A: Currently, the NPSBN can replace your existing cellular commercial service, including cellular telephone calls and mobile data. Priority, preemption and quality of service (QPP) are a few of the additional requirements for the NPSBN. FirstNet is providing an application ecosystem that provides capabilities and services relevant to public safety.

- An evolving portfolio of mobile and enterprise applications, as well as cloud services.
- An applications development platform.
- A vibrant third-party applications developer community.
- An applications store.
- Local control of users, subscriptions, services and applications.
- User-friendly federation of identity management.
- Data, application and resource sharing across diverse public safety entities (PSE).
- Core service and application delivery platforms.
- Data and applications security and privacy compliance across local, tribal, state, regional and federal jurisdictions.

In the long term, the NPSBN will facilitate a change in public safety communications, allowing enhanced situational awareness with rich multimedia, video and seamless interconnection with NG911. The possibilities have yet to be seen. The Authority also created the Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) Lab to investigate new technologies. Learn more about the lab here.

Q: Will current 3G and 4G devices (such as cell phones and air-cards) work on the FirstNet NPSBN network?

A: No. Your current device through a commercial carrier does not support the frequencies FirstNet will be using. You will need to acquire a 3GPP-compliant band-14 capable device that works on FirstNet’s network.

FirstNet anticipates NPSBN public safety customers will expect mass market as well as ruggedized devices. These devices have multimedia and high-definition data transmission both from humans and machine-based sensors and are capable of gloved, one-handed, or hands-free operation. The ecosystem shall support bring your own device (BYOD) as well as, at a minimum, devices that:

- Operate seamlessly on the NPSBN and roam onto networks, including non-band 14 commercially available networks.
- Interoperate with FirstNet’s applications ecosystem.
- Support associated Universal Integrated Circuit Card (UICC) features and options, including the ability to home and, if applicable, roam on to multiple networks while prioritizing them appropriately.
- Support software containers to isolate FirstNet applications.
- Operate seamlessly with a comprehensive device management system to allow remote provisioning and control.
Q: How do you qualify and quantify the reliability of coverage?

A: One of the main goals of the MnFCP project was to gather stakeholder requirements for the network’s coverage, performance and reliability which was submitted to FirstNet as requirements for the network. The requirements on user service availability were determined to be a broadband service with availability of 99.99% as measured in a rolling 12-month window within each reporting area.

The best way to analyze coverage for any particular agency or county is to test the network. ECN can provide a FirstNet Adoption workbook which provides more guidance for evaluation, and can be found on the Wireless Broadband page of this website.

Q: Can the FirstNet equipment collocate with the Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER)?

A: Yes. The State has strongly encouraged FirstNet to make maximum use of existing ARMER towers and facilities. AT&T will still need to follow any agency, or county requirements to collocate on any towers under their jurisdiction.