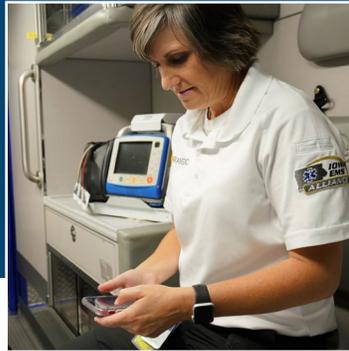


Top 10 Frequently Asked Questions



1. What is the First Responder Network Authority?

The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) is an independent authority established by Congress to deliver a nationwide broadband network dedicated to public safety. The network is strengthening public safety users' communications capabilities, enabling them to respond more quickly and effectively to accidents, disasters, and emergencies.

The FirstNet Authority is led by a board of leaders and executives from the public safety community; federal, state, and local governments; and the technology, finance, and wireless sectors. FirstNet Authority staff have expertise in public safety, telecommunications, customer service, technology, procurement, and other areas needed to ensure the development and continued improvement of the network. The FirstNet Authority is headquartered in Reston, Virginia, and has a technology center and lab in Boulder, Colorado.

2. What led to the creation of the First Responder Network Authority?

The 9/11 terrorist attacks brought to the forefront the many communications challenges that first responders face during emergencies and disasters. These issues were captured in the *9/11 Commission Report*, which identified gaps in emergency communications and recommended a nationwide network for law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical personnel communications. The public safety community united to fulfill the 9/11 Commission's recommendation, advocating before Congress for a dedicated, reliable wireless network for first responders. Their efforts led to the passage of legislation in 2012 to create a federal agency to deploy a nationwide public safety broadband network in all U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and all U.S. territories, including rural communities and tribal nations.

3. How has public safety been involved in the vision for the FirstNet network?

The FirstNet Authority has worked closely with public safety officials since the network's inception to ensure it meets first responders' needs — today and in the future. The agency engages with first responders and state public safety and technology executives in the 50 states, 5 territories, and District of Columbia, as well as local/municipal, tribal, and federal public safety leaders. The FirstNet Authority also coordinates with public safety through the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC), which provides guidance and subject matter expertise from a first responder perspective, as well as through direct engagements with public safety associations and organizations nationwide.

4. How was AT&T selected to build, operate, and maintain the FirstNet network?

The FirstNet Authority awarded the 25-year network contract to AT&T in 2017 following a fair, competitive procurement process. The procurement process followed the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and was open to all entities. The evaluation of proposals assessed the offerors' ability to submit a cost-effective and innovative model, and to meet or exceed the 16 objectives and evaluation factors outlined in the FirstNet Request for Proposal. AT&T was selected on a best-value award that considered financial sustainability and was based on more than just a technically acceptable solution at the lowest cost.



5. Why is the network being built and operated through a public-private partnership?

The public-private partnership brings together the best of the private sector, including commercial best practices, infrastructure, and resources, and the best of the public sector, including oversight, governance, and public safety expertise. The partnership between the FirstNet Authority and AT&T makes efficient use of resources, infrastructure, and incentives, supporting significant cost savings in the deployment and maintenance of the network.

If the federal government were to build, maintain, and operate this network, the estimated cost would be tens of billions of dollars over 25 years. The Government Accountability Office estimated it could cost up to \$47 billion over 10 years to construct and operate the network. In December 2023, the FirstNet Authority announced the initial 5-year buildout of the network was completed on time and on budget.

To support this public-private partnership model, Congress used the sale of communications airwaves (or spectrum) to fund FirstNet's initial operations and help start network deployment. No taxpayer funds were used to support the network. Further, the public-private partnership ensures FirstNet Authority and AT&T do not need any additional federal funding to build and operate the network — it is fully funded and self-sustaining. In return, America's first responders get services far above and beyond what they previously had over a first-class broadband network dedicated to their communications needs.

6. What are the key terms of this public-private partnership?

The key terms of the partnership include the following:

- **20 MHz of federally owned spectrum and \$6.5 billion in initial funding** to the partnership; in return AT&T will deploy and operate a nationwide high-speed broadband network for public safety over 25 years.
- **AT&T will invest about \$40 billion** over the life of the contract to build, operate, deploy, and maintain the network, and, together with the FirstNet Authority, will ensure the network evolves with the needs of public safety.
- **AT&T can use FirstNet's spectrum when it is not being used by public safety** for other commercial purposes. The company will prioritize first responders over any other commercial users.
- **The FirstNet Authority oversees the network contract** to ensure it delivers innovation, technology, and customer care to public safety.

7. What makes FirstNet different from other networks? How does the network benefit responders?

FirstNet improves communications, response times, and outcomes for first responders from coast-to-coast, in rural and urban areas, inland and on borders, leading to safer, more secure communities. The network delivers specialized features — such as priority access, preemption, greater network capacity, and a resilient, hardened connection — that help ensure first responders can communicate in any emergency, regardless of commercial network congestion.

The network also supports extensive device and apps ecosystems that connect first responders to innovative, life-saving technologies. Improved location-based services, including Z-axis capabilities, help with mapping and tracking resources and personnel during emergencies. FirstNet Push-to-Talk is built on mission critical standards and supports mission critical voice communications, data/messaging, video, and location services. AT&T maintains a fleet of dedicated deployables that boost coverage in the aftermath of disasters, during large planned events or incidents, and in remote areas. These mobile cell sites are available to FirstNet subscribers 24/7 at no extra cost.

Additionally, network technology is tested and validated through the Boulder FirstNet Lab to ensure first responders have the proven tools they need in disasters and emergencies. Furthermore, the FirstNet Authority oversees the FirstNet contract, working to ensure that AT&T delivers on the terms of the contract. This function is unique to FirstNet; no other network gives public safety the same level of assurances and government oversight.



8. What's happening with FirstNet now?

FirstNet has made major advances since the public-private partnership was announced in 2017. Efforts include:

Expanding the network beyond initial buildout of Band 14 spectrum: Following the approval of State Plans in 2017, AT&T deployed Band 14 capacity and coverage throughout the nation. As of 2023, FirstNet's coverage footprint has grown to more than 2.91 million square miles nationwide, covering more than 99% of the American population. In 2023, the FirstNet Authority verified and validated that the initial five-year Band 14 Radio Access Network buildout was complete and 100% of contract milestones and state commitments were complete and delivered by AT&T. The FirstNet Authority will continue to work with public safety to determine where coverage enhancements are needed to support public safety's mission.

Driving public safety innovation: FirstNet is unlocking a new technology marketplace for public safety. The FirstNet App Catalog is growing with FirstNet-approved mobile apps that are optimized for public safety use over the network. The FirstNet device ecosystem supports a variety of devices that can operate on the network and take advantage of FirstNet's public safety-focused features, such as priority and preemption. The device ecosystem is extensive and includes everything from smartphones to Wi-Fi hotspots and wearable devices.

Securing emergency communications: FirstNet's first-of-its-kind core infrastructure gives first responders the dedicated, highly secure, non-commercial network they deserve. The FirstNet Core, delivered in March 2018, provides encryption of public safety data over FirstNet and end-to-end cybersecurity. FirstNet subscribers also have access to a dedicated Security Operations Center, offering 24/7/365 support.

Creating a differentiated broadband communications experience for public safety: The FirstNet Authority developed a Roadmap to advance and evolve FirstNet beyond the base contractual commitments and to create opportunities for public safety to shape the future of their network. The Roadmap provides a view of emergency responders' critical communications needs and technology trends for mobile broadband communications. The FirstNet Authority uses the Roadmap to prioritize its programs, activities, and investments.

Engaging with public safety: The FirstNet Authority engages with public safety in the states, territories, federal agencies, and tribal nations to understand their trends, drivers, and priorities and collaborate with them to realize the operational benefits of FirstNet's differentiated broadband communications experience. Input gathered from public safety on their critical communications needs is continuously incorporated into the FirstNet Authority's Roadmap to help guide the growth, evolution, and advancement of FirstNet.

9. How will the network continue to evolve?

The FirstNet Authority has a legislative mandate to invest funds back into the network. This enables the FirstNet Authority to continuously upgrade the network to address public safety factors and network considerations. To date, the FirstNet Authority has delivered investments to upgrade the FirstNet Core for initial 5G technologies, expand the dedicated fleet of deployable assets, and improve in-building coverage for primary FirstNet subscribers.

The FirstNet Authority will continue to engage with public safety to capture their needs and guide resources to advance the network. In the coming years, we will lead the evolution of FirstNet to a full 5G capable network, continue enhancing network coverage, and explore other innovation opportunities for public safety.

10. How can I learn more?

Stay up to date on FirstNet Authority activities and the evolution of FirstNet at [FirstNet.gov](https://www.firstnet.gov). Follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube (@FirstNetGov).