FIRSTNET®

Newsletter

Critical connections for rural South Dakota

Pennington County's Rapid City is hundreds of miles from the next largest city. With a geography that includes remote, rugged locations, first responders in the past have struggled with communications. Hear how the FirstNet build-out is helping them keep their communities safe. **WATCH VIDEO**

Infrastructure, deployable assets provide county incentive to join FirstNet

By Tony Harrison
Investigations Commander,
Pennington County Sheriff's Office

The unique thing about Pennington County is that we have the Black Hills in our jurisdiction. And this obviously makes cell phone communication and digital communication difficult because of the terrain. The Eastern side is much more plains and flatland.

Another factor is that Rapid City is the biggest city, until you get to the other side of the state, or Denver or Salt Lake or Fargo. So, we're kind out here on an island – 300 to 400 miles away from the next biggest help. And we have to rely on each other when we have a major event, because we're all we have until you get help from other bigger places.

So, when we looked at the FirstNet plan, we knew we wanted great coverage.

FirstNet Push-to-Talk launches

Public safety agencies across U.S. test technology

Developed from the ground up specifically with and for public safety, FirstNet Push-to-Talk (PTT) is the first-ever nationwide mission-critical standards-based push-to-talk solution to launch in the U.S. We tested the FirstNet PTT solution with public safety agencies across the country, including the Cranford Police Department in New Jersey.

"Reliable communication is critical. It must work. It must be there when we need it," said Captain Guy Patterson of the Cranford Police Department. "And it must be crystal clear because we don't have time to repeat ourselves or introduce room for errors in fast-changing situations or when lives are on the line. Our experience with FirstNet Push-to-Talk has been excellent. On more than one occasion, FirstNet PTT allowed us to effectively communicate when our traditional systems failed.

"Testing FirstNet PTT was an intensely promising experience, showing us the future capability, quality and performance we can infuse into our response to enhance

FirstNet Push-to-talk launches in the U.S.

effectiveness and collaboration," Captain Patterson continued.

Currently available in a controlled-introduction, FirstNet PTT is designed to enable public safety to use their smartphones, feature phones, and specialized ultra-rugged devices like they would use a two-way radio, with highly reliable, high-performance calling. FirstNet PTT will also deliver new features that allow first responders to better react to changing events.

App ecosystem

We're building a broad ecosystem of devices, apps and accessories that will support FirstNet PTT and drive further innovation, choice and flexibility for public safety.

The first device to launch is the Samsung Galaxy XCover FieldPro. This field-ready device is purpose-built, equipped with push-to-talk capability, and highly secure. Its features make it suited for use by first responders across all public safety disciplines.

Devices are subject to hundreds of tests that cover many key capabilities, from security and durability to network impacts, to help make sure they meet the needs of first responders.

Only devices that pass these tests are certified and approved as FirstNet Ready™.

We've also certified an Assured Wireless Corporation embedded IoT module and USB connected modem as FirstNet Ready in preparation for launching high-power user equipment (HPUE) solutions.

Following 3GPP standards, power class 1 HPUE solutions can transmit stronger signals.

Signal strength

This increased signal can only be transmitted using Band 14 spectrum – the nationwide, high-quality spectrum set aside by the U.S. government specifically for FirstNet. For first responders serving rural, remote and tribal communities, HPUE could
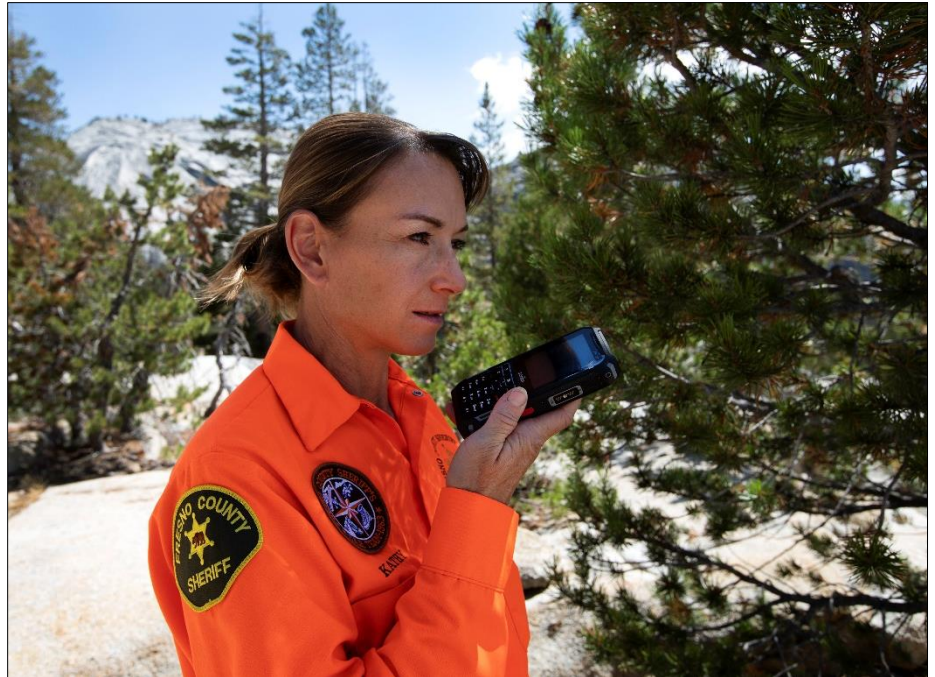
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> **– Captain Guy Patterson,**
> Cranford Police Department

significantly increase their coverage area. For urban and suburban first responders, this could help address the common challenge of indoor or below ground coverage.

The stronger signal provides increased availability to meet mission needs for users who are connecting from hard-to-reach places like basements, elevators, stairwells, and parking garages, and helping first

responders reliably communicate inside and out. In 2017, the federal government selected AT&T to build and manage FirstNet, public safety's network.

We have a responsibility unlike any other wireless carrier, and the FirstNet Authority will hold AT&T accountable to deliver the solutions that meet public safety's needs – today and for decades to come.

Infrastructure, deployable assets give county incentive to join FirstNet

(Continued from Page 1)

We wanted that FirstNet Band 14 quality. Technology has evolved so much with patrol cars and body cameras and car cameras, that we need a bigger wire to push information through. And we felt the FirstNet pipe would be the pipe that we needed.

So we put our chips on FirstNet because we believe the infrastructure is going to be there. What's not there now, will be there shortly. And we really believe that the government is going to hold FirstNet to a higher standard; that it's going to meet our Needs.

Tower infrastructure

For us, the new infrastructure that FirstNet is putting in – especially the tower coverage – is the most critical thing.

We have deputies who need to make cell phone calls. And we need them to be able to access their mobile computers for our records management system. Plus, we use body cameras that upload through the cellular network. So we need a good, strong signal to get all that done.

There are places in the Hills that will never have coverage because it's physically impossible to get a cell signal down to it. We recognize that. But what we want is just the biggest, strongest signal that we can have in the areas that have it. For us, in the jurisdiction we're in and the agencies we work with, it was important that there was a plan built out over the next 2-3 years for coverage.

FirstNet tools

Communication is the foundation of any event. If you lose your communication, you can lose your management and command and control of an event.

We have tons of hunting and fishing in the Black Hills. Oftentimes, hunters or hikers get off the trail and get lost. Having the ability to call FirstNet and have them bring in a Cell on Wheels has been a great help in searching.

When we bring in dozens of people to search, we need a strong network to communicate. Cell phone communication back to headquarters is important so we can get information we need. So the ability to get those portable cell phone towers is a very important feature for us.

Having access to search and rescue apps is also important. And you can't use those if you don't have a good cell signal. There's an incredible app you can download and pull up a map of the Hills. You can build a box that you want to walk so you can track where you've been. Technology's come so far, but without the ability to use a cell signal, sometimes it just doesn't work.

Interoperability

When you have an event like the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, which brings in half-a-million plus people over the course of a couple of weeks, the stress of the network goes up. Plus, with more people, that leads to more crashes, more disturbances. And all of that combined can stress the network. So it's good to be on FirstNet and Band 14, which gets us above that commercial level. It allows us to get the work we need done so we can serve the citizens of our county.

Having that high level of communication is super critical for us and for all the law enforcement agencies we work with. We want to make sure we can control an event and not have an event inside of an

event simply because we couldn't communicate.

Officer safety

FirstNet really is the foundation of all of our operations across Pennington County. It's our primary cell phone provider for all our sergeants, command staff, investigators. We also use it as our platform for our Cradlepoints in our vehicles.

But probably the biggest benefit for us is the speed at which our cars are moving data. For the patrol folks out there – the guys and gals who wear the uniform – the car is their office. And they tell me that since we moved to FirstNet, information goes across and comes back across quicker at traffic stop time.

Our deputies don't have the luxury of having a hardwired desktop computer. They have to rely on a strong cell signal. And that's what FirstNet provides.

Captain Tony Harrison is Investigations Commander for the Pennington County Sheriff's Office and was most recently Commander of the Patrol Division. He has worked in Law Enforcement for nearly 24 years, starting in October 1996. He is also the Commander of the Rapid City / Pennington County Special Response Team (SWAT Team) and when there is a critical live-saving mission, the SRT counts on good cell signal and communication to resolve those dangers situations safely.

"FirstNet really is the foundation of all of our operations across Pennington County."

Capt. Tony Harrison
Pennington County Sheriff's Office

3

Helping first responders maintain critical connections as they battle COVID-19

By Jason Porter
Senior Vice President,
FirstNet Program at AT&T

To free overwhelmed local hospitals focusing on patients with COVID-19, the Navy hospital ship USNS Mercy is docked at a port in Los Angeles to provide medical and surgical care to non-COVID-19 patients. This state-of-the-art hospital ship has 1,000 beds, 12 operating rooms, digital radiology and CAT-scan capabilities and even a pharmacy.

But when it arrived, it lacked one critical asset – connectivity.

FirstNet went into quick action to help ensure military, EMS, paramedics, nurses and physicians had the interoperable connectivity in and around this temporary hospital.

Installing a connection

Working across teams, we installed and activated a dedicated 1 gigabit land-to-ship circuit connection.

As public safety's network partner, we were ready at the harbor as the ship docked. And within 24 hours the ship's first responders had the critical communications capabilities they

needed to achieve their heroic missions. We also deployed a portable cell site nearby to further increase network capacity for the influx of first responders on FirstNet – the *only* nationwide, high-speed broadband communications platform built with and for America's first responders and the extended public safety community.

With public safety's Band 14 spectrum on the harbor, FirstNet subscribers were protected against commercial traffic congestion, giving them dedicated access to their public safety network when needed.

Everything in the world right now is changing, and we are doing the same. But with FirstNet, law enforcement, fire and EMS agencies in disparate jurisdictions can reliably communicate.

Improving agency interoperability is a key element of the FirstNet framework, and we are fulfilling that vision.

Our teams continue to work around the clock to help ensure first responders – city, state, tribal, federal and the extended community – stay connected.

News for FirstNet users

Network status map includes COVID-19 dashboard

The [Coronavirus COVID-19 Dashboard](#) link is now accessible from FirstNet Central under the Network Status Map. The Dashboard maps all confirmed cases down to the county level. Data sources include: WHO, CDC, ECDC, NHC, DXY, 1point3acres, Worldometers.info, BNO, state and national government health departments, and local media reports.
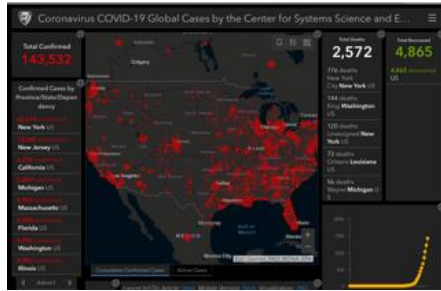
Local Control becoming FirstNet Central

FirstNet Local Control is changing its name to FirstNet Central. As we transition, FirstNet users will see the new name appear on the main page of the portal – and later in support documentation and email.

communications. The FirstNet Central portal will still be accessible via the previous URL: https://localcontrol.firstnet.att.com as well as the new URL: https://firstnetcentral.firstnet.com.

The digital tools you need now more than ever

During this critical time, we are learning to navigate in different ways. As more people are working remotely, online resources have become a very important part of our daily routine. Learn how to manage your products and services with free courses that show you how to navigate the tools you need, including FirstNet Central and Uplift Manager. [Register today](#) for instructor-led training courses available to you and your colleagues.

Interested in FirstNet? Apply and order online

First responders can now go directly to [firstnet.com](#) to apply for service and order devices for their individual lines of service through a simplified process. If you're already an AT&T customer, you can go online to transfer your AT&T wireless number to a FirstNet account. Just activate a FirstNet ID, log in, and begin shopping. Start the process today!! [Apply today!](#)

First Responders & Individuals:

SWITCH TO FIRSTNET & SAVE $200

Save $200 when you buy a new FirstNet Ready™ smartphone with new activation of a FirstNet Mobile-Responder line on AT&T Installment*

*Ltd. time offer. Not avail. In MA. Req's purch. on 0% APR AT&T Installment (30-mo. at max $66/mo.) agmt. Credits start w/in 3 bills. Avail. only to elig. first responders who activate a new smartphone line of service as a Subscriber Paid User on FirstNet Mobile- Responder plan w/ elig. voice & data svc. If svc cancelled, device balance due (up to $1979.99). Tax on full retail price due at sale. Add'l fees & restr's apply.

SEE DETAILS