

# ADDED TO THE PLAN FOR FirstNet

## Bringing PSAPs into the Planning Process for Public Safety Broadband

BY KRISTI WILDE

Following the events of 9/11, the public safety community unified behind efforts to establish a nationwide, reliable network dedicated to providing advanced data communications capabilities during emergencies and disasters.

On Feb. 22, 2012, the bill that would fulfill the last unmet recommendation of the 9/11 Commission was signed into law by President Obama. This law establishes the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) and charges it with building, deploying and operating a Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN). FirstNet holds

the single nationwide public safety wireless license granted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). This network will provide more efficient real-time information sharing for the nation's first responders, allowing them to provide their vital services better and in less time,

where it is needed most. It will bring to reality the decades-long desire for fully integrated interoperable communications for responders, improving situational awareness and decision making across all levels of response.

From a public safety communications perspective, the FirstNet network will

allows that data to flow beyond the calltakers and dispatchers to the field, we will have truly begun an evolution in public safety communications.

FirstNet has been tasked with creating a reliable and interoperable nationwide public safety broadband network, and shortly we will start the formal consultation process among the nation's 56 states and territories.

Building out a nationwide network dedicated to public safety is a monumental task and a historic opportunity for us all. Preparing our stakeholders for this challenge will be an ongoing

process, but an interactive one. We will have multiple conversations along the way as we work toward drafting state plans and implementing the nationwide public safety broadband network.

During our early stages of regional meetings and stakeholder forums we

**When information sharing works, it is a powerful tool.**

be more than increased wireless access to mission critical data. This national network will truly complete the paradigm that begins with Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1). When callers are able to transmit data, photos and video over 9-1-1 trunks, and when this dedicated network



have listened carefully and we know there are many questions yet to be answered, specifically once we determine aspects such as cost, process and scope. Within FirstNet, we look at this process in terms of four key elements: 1) initial introduction; 2) identification, communication and relationship building with and between stakeholders; 3) planning, exercising and evaluating the path to full operability with key operational augmentation via mission critical data; and 4) preparing stakeholder

communities for the iterative process of state consultation.

#### **INITIAL INTRODUCTION**

PSAPs are the interface between the public and first responders. Just as PSAPs must upgrade 9-1-1 to meet the demands of how the public communicates, FirstNet is working to provide a dedicated NPSBN to allow responders to utilize the most modern communications capabilities in their jobs. Therefore, it is a natural

fit for PSAPs to be involved in the planning, consultation, deployment and operations of FirstNet.

TJ Kennedy is deputy general manager at FirstNet and has often noted that implementing FirstNet will make wireless delivery of critical 9-1-1 data to all first responders a reality. Traditionally, 9-1-1 centers have been the public's primary entry point for emergency services, but 9-1-1 has evolved. Today we have NG9-1-1. NG9-1-1 and FirstNet should work hand-in-hand,

integrating seamlessly so that an entirely new level of communication and tools are available for public safety response.

We need to facilitate the conversation about access to data applications in the field, emergency operations centers and, of course, back and forth between PSAPs and other agencies.

As NG9-1-1 networks are engineered and built, our communications centers are preparing for the operational impact of transmitting varied media (text, photos and video) across phone trunks. Is the data from in-vehicle telematics something we need to view in the communications center? Or should we write a standard operating procedure (SOP) that directs us to pass it along to the paramedics responding to the scene and the emergency department (ED) that will receive the patients? If we have an active shooter in a school, which building layouts will telecomunicators be able to access, refer to as caller information is gathered and use for shared situational awareness? What do the initial incident commander and the eventual emergency operations center manager need? How might tactical dispatchers prepare and support their missions?

Our expectation and our goal is to develop a nationwide platform for sharing information that will greatly improve public safety service delivery at every level and better protect the lives of our nation's first responders

### STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

Start thinking about who in your organization would be a good liaison for this initial introduction. PSAPs are the communications hub, connecting various agencies with different resources dedicated to a particular response. Check to see if your agency has compiled the following:

- Do you have a contact person for each state, tribal and local public safety agency in your area?

- Have you identified local champions for integrated public safety communications; those who have already built trust with particular groups who can carry the message and solicit input?

- Have you identified those who are likely to be interested or appropriate for partnering and/or sharing infrastructure resources?

These activities, coupled with introductory meetings with various stakeholder groups, are a fabulous way to get the conversation going. Now take it one step further:

## PSAPs are the interface between the public & first responders.

- Has your state scheduled a broadband coverage workshop through the Department of Homeland Security Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)? These workshops involve a diverse group of stakeholder representatives and are generally coordinated through your statewide interoperability coordinator on behalf of your state interoperability executive council or governing board. This is an excellent forum for getting the conversation started.

- Who are the public safety users within your jurisdiction?

- Where do they need data coverage?

- What are the priorities?

- What issues are top-of-mind for users? For example, certain remote access may require "carry it with you" coverage.

In the OEC workshop, you'll have an opportunity to review coverage maps in layers so you can start discussing your priorities around specific factors (e.g., incidents, population and agency locations). If the workshop has already occurred, check the information in the follow-up report. Use the

pre-consultation time to establish and/or reinforce your relationships with those who are likely to be involved during a response. Prepare to share information and input with your state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) when the time comes.

### FUTURE PLANNING

In his presentation at the APCO Emerging Technologies Forum in early December, Andy Seybold, vice chair of the APCO Broadband Committee and a FirstNet consultant, proposed a

common sense approach to planning for the future of FirstNet. He recommends strengthening your unified command planning. Get your potential incident commanders from multiple agencies and disciplines together in one room and have them talk about how they might use and prioritize data, photo and video applications

in an emergency response. Include communications center operations managers, emergency managers and Communications Unit Leaders (COML). Consider that you could have capacity issues. Who has priority? How will decisions be made?

Some of you have already had this discussion in relation to your land mobile radio system upgrades. Be sure you are discussing the issues in terms of each discipline involved. Incorporate the results of this discussion into tabletops and functional exercises to be evaluated.

In late August 2013, FirstNet officials visited Oklahoma City and Moore,

Okla., to meet with a broad range of public safety representatives and debrief their tornado response operations. The first questions posed by FirstNet general manager Bill D'Agostino and board member Craig Farrill were about emergency communications and event management: What do you have that worked well, and what did you wish you had access to that could have made a difference? A number of supervisors and managers regularly look at the same two questions in incident debriefs and after action reports.

Prepare yourselves to participate in the conversations that will inform the state consultation process. FirstNet, by law, will be consulting directly with the states. The state SPOCs are responsible for facilitating the relationships and conversations that will lead to a robust plan for FirstNet within each state. For the majority of you, there will be support from the NTIA State and Local Implementation Grant Program (SLIGP) for this effort (read more about SLIGP on page 20). The FirstNet commitment to you is that we will only ask for the information necessary to generate a state plan. Having conversations with your stakeholders during pre-consultation will make it easier to collect data and feedback for the state plan when the time comes.

Another avenue for feedback on this build-out is the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC). This committee of association representatives serves in

an advisory capacity to FirstNet. The committee's first assignment was to provide feedback on the human factors and considerations surrounding new technologies, and a report summarizing the potential ergonomic and cognitive impacts of technology has been submitted for review. The PSAC members are now working to compile several use cases to demonstrate how technologies can be applied to job tasks. The PSAC is also working on identity management recommendations to address user authentication for appropriate access. APCO is represented on the PSAC and has been heavily involved with FirstNet since the beginning in a number of ways. APCO International Immediate Past President Terry Hall is your current PSAC representative.

In the 9/11 Commission report, section 13.3, the authors spoke of "unifying the many participants (in the counterterrorism effort) and their knowledge in a network-based information sharing system that transcends traditional government boundaries ... When information sharing works, it is a powerful tool. Therefore the sharing and uses of information must be guided by a set of practical policy guidelines that simultaneously empower and constrain

officials, telling them clearly what is and is not permitted."

Facilitating awareness and considerations for practical operational changes in and outside of the PSAP environment with mission critical support data is important now. There are many resources available to help inform you at [www.firstnet.gov](http://www.firstnet.gov). Public safety communications professionals are on the front lines, through the calls from citizens and the communications with responders. Make sure that you are ready to be part of this conversation.

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**KRISTI WILDE, ENP**, is a member of the FirstNet outreach team and a senior member of APCO International. She began working with FirstNet following retirement as a PSAP manager, serving more than 30 years in a consolidated 9-1-1 center in Eugene, Ore., and as an associate with Emergency Services Consulting International in Wilsonville, Ore. Contact her at [kristi.wilde@firstnet.gov](mailto:kristi.wilde@firstnet.gov).



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