FirstNet Reaches Over 1 Million Connections, Launches Blimp

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Aggressive Band 14 coverage expansion over 75% complete; advancing the public safety mission with applications, devices and solutions designed to serve America's first responders

The FirstNet public safety communications platform - built with AT&T* in a public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) - is growing in a big way. More than 10,000 public safety agencies and organizations across the country have subscribed. And over 1 million FirstNet connections are in service, bringing first responders and those that support them the reliability, capability and accountability they trust to carry out their mission.

'Public safety is called upon to handle emergencies every single day. They have to be ready for the worst with the best tools to help them respond safely, efficiently and effectively,' said **Jason Porter, senior vice president, FirstNet Program at AT&T.** 'We're honored to see FirstNet play a supporting role in that response for thousands of agencies across the country.

'FirstNet is the only wireless communications platform that's been architected from the ground up just for the public safety community. It's specifically designed to advance public safety communications, equipping subscribing first responders with the innovative, mission-focused tools, technologies and features they can't get anywhere else.'

That includes a giant addition to the FirstNet disaster response arsenal: FirstNet One - an approximately 55-foot aerostat. More commonly known as a blimp, the FirstNet One aerostat is the 76th deployable network asset to join the nationwide FirstNet fleet.

FirstNet One brings a first-of-its-kind public safety communications solution to help keep responders connected during large-scale, catastrophic events:

- Can fly up to 1,000 feet, potentially providing over 2 times the coverage area as compared to other deployable solutions, like Satellite Cells on Wheels and Flying Cells on Wings™ (COWs).
- Fully operational in windspeeds up to 50 mph and capable of withstanding windspeeds up to 70 mph.
- Able to stay aloft for about 2 weeks before needing additional helium top-off, giving first responders wide-scale portable connectivity over an extended period of time.
- Tethered to a trailer to provide either satellite or wireline backhaul.
- Reduces the need for multiple ground-based portable cell sites, freeing those dedicated assets to be used by other agencies nationwide.

The aerostat was recently tested in Tuskegee, Ala. Flight testing established its initial coverage area, airworthiness, payload lift potential, avionics and flight controls, and performance of the power and data transmission lines connecting to the FirstNet network core. Operational methods, procedures and safety standards required to deploy, launch, operate and recover the asset in a public safety incident response scenario were also tested.

'Testing FirstNet One at the historically significant Sharpe Field once again broke new ground for the safety and protection of our country,' said **Alabama Governor Kay Ivey.** 'With the launch of public safety's aerostat, I look forward to seeing how FirstNet will continue to take the communications capabilities of our Nation's first responders to the next level.'

Like the other 75 portable assets - including 3 Flying COWs™ - FirstNet One will be available 24/7 at no additional charge to FirstNet subscribers for potential use during major incidents. Disasters where FirstNet One could be deployed include major hurricanes like last year's Hurricane Michael, where FirstNet assets were deployed for 3+ months in the Florida panhandle while recovery efforts were underway. The FirstNet team at AT&T, led by former first responders, will determine the appropriate asset to send - or resolution - based on the situation.

'Witnessing the FirstNet One aerostat airborne test was fascinating and being onsite to see the operations and speak with the team reinforced the value of the FirstNet communications platform,' said **Alabama Emergency Management Agency Director Brian Hastings.** 'This FirstNet relationship is

critical to exploring innovative and creative communication capabilities.'

So far this year, public safety has turned to FirstNet deployable network assets for additional support during 450+ emergencies and planned events - like sporting events, parades and training activities vital to keeping first responders mission-ready.

For example, Santa Clara County Sheriff Search and Rescue called on the FirstNet team to support a large-scale training drill across numerous agencies spanning multiple jurisdictions. Set in a mountainous region, the FirstNet Flying COW™ was deployed, making its debut flight to support participating first responders.

Santa Clara County Sheriff Search and Rescue Technical Rescue Coordinator Rusty Wackermann said, 'In remote areas of the county, communications have always been a challenge. And if we can't communicate, we can't see if our teams are safe or obtain the latest rescue status from those in the field. FirstNet is solving for this, giving us on-demand access to the connectivity we need when our community needs us the most.'

FirstNet subscribers also continue to benefit from permanent network enhancements as we aggressively expand FirstNet's coverage and capacity across the country. Using all AT&T LTE bands, FirstNet already covers over 99% of the U.S. population today. And with Band 14 deployed in over 675 markets[1], more than 75% of our Band 14 nationwide coverage target has already been completed - well ahead of schedule. This includes every major city from coast to coast, rural towns like Hempstead, Ark., Lincoln, N.M., and Maury, Tenn., and tribal areas like White Earth Reservation where a new, purpose-built site recently went on-air nearby.

'After experiencing wireless data connectivity issues, we began searching for a solution. We field-tested several FirstNet devices and received an overwhelmingly positive response from all the users, so we made the decision to switch all city departments to FirstNet,' said **Captain Jeremy Ward, Blytheville Police Department.** 'Since the switch, we have had a reliable connection and great coverage, which helps us keep our community safe.'

And, FirstNet goes beyond delivering reliable, unthrottled connectivity to public safety. With more than 100 FirstNet Ready™ devices and 100 approved apps in the FirstNet App Catalog, public safety agencies across the country are continuing to turn to the innovative tools in the FirstNet ecosystem to cost-effectively advance their routine and emergency responses.

For example, a public safety agency in Massachusetts is using FirstNet Listed application Vizsafe to enhance situational awareness for their hazmat teams.

Peter Mottur, CEO of Vizsafe said, 'Using Vizsafe on FirstNet, the agency can now broadcast and view live video streams from first responders, track near real-time user location on the front lines and share insights with Command staff to improve decision making and streamline response.'

We also plan to launch FirstNet Push-to-Talk in early 2020. This is a standards-compliant, mission-centric solution that's being purpose-built for public safety. It's designed to further advance first responders' communication capabilities with reliable, high-performance calling.

'Since its launch, FirstNet has created a dedicated marketplace for public safety broadband communications that never existed before, and we are only scratching the surface on the innovations this network is driving,' said **FirstNet Authority's Edward Parkinson.** 'Public safety's critical communications needs will always be at the center of their network, and we are proud to support more than 10,000 agencies using more than 1 million FirstNet connections across the country. We look forward to continuing to work hand-in-hand with public safety and AT&T as we head into a new year of network expansion and growth.'

FirstNet is public safety's dedicated, nationwide communications platform. It's bringing public safety communications into the 21st century with new, innovative capabilities to strengthen first responders' incident response. And it's helping them connect to the critical information they need - every day and in every emergency.

Go here for more FirstNet news. Or check out FirstNet.com to learn more about the program.

1Markets defined by FCC CMAs.

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***GWS OneScore, September 2019.

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