

TRIBAL NATIONS AND FIRSTNET

WHAT IS THE FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY (FIRSTNET)?

In 2012, Federal Law created the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) to build a national, 4G/LTE, wireless broadband data network dedicated to improving wireless data exchange between federal, state, local, and tribal public safety responders. The FirstNet network will improve citizen and responder safety and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency response through cutting edge broadband applications.

FirstNet will work with tribal government, states, and territories through the State Points of Contact (SPOCs) to design a network that meets the individual geographic, cultural, operational, and political needs of each state's public safety community. The Washington OneNet program will assist FirstNet with its design for Washington State and tribal governments.

DATA AVAILABILITY AND TRIBAL NATIONS

Recent events such as the January 2015 floods, the Carlton Complex fire, and the SR530 Oso Landslide have shown us that disasters and emergencies don't recognize jurisdictional boundaries between states, cities, counties, and tribal governments. The ability to effectively share data is a critical component to rescue and recovery efforts during disasters and everyday events. FirstNet proposes to mitigate data exchange challenges by providing a single, dedicated platform for wireless data transfer for emergency responders.

WHAT WILL FIRSTNET DO FOR MY NATION?

Tribal participation is critical to ensuring a network design that benefits our responders and tribal members. Tribes in Washington State encompass over 2 million acres of land and contribute billions of dollars to the state's economy. Many Tribal governments are currently underserved by wired and wireless broadband technology and this effort may provide a critical base for building FirstNet network services in Washington. FirstNet may need to make investments in Indian Country via building or leasing critical infrastructure in order to design a network that satisfies the needs of responders.

"STATE POINT OF CONTACT" or SPOC - DRIVES THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The process for designing a nationwide wireless broadband network is different than any other federal endeavor. The FirstNet law recognizes that interoperability between neighboring jurisdictions is key to a successful design and build-out. Additionally, the FirstNet law requires that the Governor of each state review the design to ensure that it meets the needs of public safety statewide. Finally, the Governor must authorize construction of the network in the state (Opt-in). The Governor can also opt-out of FirstNet's design for Washington if it does not adequately address the concerns of responders from tribal governments and state and local organizations. For all these reasons, FirstNet has designated the SPOCs to coordinate design efforts within each state and with tribal governments.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR BUILDING THE NETWORK?

FirstNet will be responsible for building out the network core. If, after completing the design process, a state decides to opt-in and accept the state plan jointly developed by the state, tribes, and FirstNet, then FirstNet will pay to build out the state's radio access network (RAN) -- the towers, radio sites, and on-the-ground fiber optic network -- that will connect to the core. FirstNet will also be financially responsible for the network's operations and maintenance.

Use of the FirstNet network is voluntary - tribes and their public safety agencies are not required to participate. However, a network built for and dedicated to public safety agencies will provide a dependable and affordable user experience making FirstNet network an attractive choice for responders.

HOW MUCH WILL THE FIRSTNET SUBSCRIPTION COST?

FirstNet intends to offer services at a compelling and competitive cost to attract millions of public safety users and make the FirstNet network self-sustaining. The costs for FirstNet's services and devices have not yet been determined.

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OPERATING AND MANAGING THE NETWORK?

FirstNet will be responsible for managing core operations and RAN operations for opt-in states. FirstNet also will enable robust identity management and authentication practices at the local level.

State, local, and tribal stakeholders as well as technical and operational experts, will participate in a series of meetings with FirstNet as part of the required design process. Once the state plan is finalized and if the governor opts into the network, the RAN will be built to the design specifications.

WHAT AGENCIES BESIDES LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRE, EMS, AND 911 CAN USE THE NETWORK? WHAT OTHER TRIBAL OFFICIALS WILL BE ABLE TO USE THE NETWORK DURING AN EMERGENCY?

FirstNet issued a public comment notice in 2014 regarding eligible public safety entities under the law to solicit input from stakeholders on this topic. State and territory specific discussions regarding eligible users will occur during the design process.

HOW CAN MY TRIBAL NATION PARTICIPATE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FIRSTNET?

FirstNet is responsible for working through the designated state SPOCs to consult with states, local communities, tribal governments, and first responders to gather requirements for developing its network deployment plans.

Data sharing between tribes and with outside public safety entities must accommodate the specific requirements of sovereign nations. Input from tribal leadership, emergency managers, technology directors, and police and fire chiefs is critical to a comprehensive design that ensures tribal proprietary needs while providing reliable interoperability with surrounding jurisdictions.

FirstNet will need information from tribal leaders and their public safety responders about how and where data is shared or not, where the network can leverage existing infrastructure, where the network will need to add infrastructure, who are responders in Indian country and nearby communities, and much more.

Washington OneNet has established a stakeholder and technical committee to work with FirstNet on a design for the network. The work of the committees determines network priority in emergencies, security, and coverage, etc. Please consider joining a committee so FirstNet will understand your concerns about interoperability on Tribal lands.

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