

Newsletter

October 2022

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Volume 6, Edition 10

MISSION CRITICAL TOOLS



Your mission critical technology

FirstNet keeps your communications technology Mission Ready – continuously evolving to meet your needs. Your network now includes a suite of mission critical technologies to maintain, support and enhance your communications.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)



Your mission critical services

Your network gives you the coverage, apps, and solutions you need to complete your mission. FirstNet offers you the mission critical Services you need to do your job, including access to the Response Operations Group to help deliver connectivity when and where you need it. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

HURRICANE SUPPORT



Helping keep responders connected for Hurricane Ian

After slamming the Florida coastline last Wednesday, Hurricane Ian battered the state with record flooding. Then it intensified and made landfall again in South Carolina. Public safety quickly sprang into action. And FirstNet emergency response teams were there for them – responding to over 100 requests for support. [READ MORE ON PAGE 4](#)

Keeping Puerto Rico responders connected as Fiona batters island

Puerto Rico was once again struck by a devastating hurricane. Exactly 5 years after Hurricane Maria made landfall, the U.S. territory is now recovering from the extreme rainfall and winds from Hurricane Fiona.

With FirstNet® – the only network built with and for first responders – public safety is our priority. And FirstNet has made an instrumental difference in [CONTINUED ON PAGE 6](#)



RESPONDER WELLNESS

9-1-1 Telecommunications: More than just a stressful call

Today, with over 240 million calls to 9-1-1 in the U.S., most people assume 9-1-1 professionals are answering only emergency calls. But that's far from reality.

"Only about 40% of calls are true life-threatening emergencies", says Mark Spross, director, METCOM 911 in Oregon.



By Anna Fitch Courie, DNP, RN, PHNA-BC

Director, Responder Wellness, FirstNet® Program at AT&T

Before 9-1-1, when community members had an emergency, they would have to call their local operator, sheriff, police, hospital or fire department for help – and hope they had the correct number from the phone book. Those groups then bore the responsibility of dispatching the appropriate entity.

As emergencies became more complex, municipalities grew and resources expanded, the need for a professional who could take the call, triage the issue, and deploy the right assets quickly became evident. With this, the profession of 9-1-1 telecommunications was born.

In 1967, the FCC worked with AT&T to determine if a single code could route emergency calls quickly and easily to a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). This would streamline emergency response and improve the efficiency of life saving measures. In 1968, with the backing of the FCC, AT&T announced the implementation of 9-1-1 as the emergency activation code nationwide.

Today, with over 240 million calls to 9-1-1 in the U.S., most people assume 9-1-1 professionals are answering only emergency calls. But that's far from reality.

"Only about 40% of calls are true life-threatening emergencies", says Mark Spross, director, METCOM 911 in Oregon. The remaining 60% of calls that communities route through PSAPs are for information, connecting to

services and mental health triage, among others.

There are just over 95,000 positions nationwide¹ handling these calls. One of the challenges is that vacancies in PSAPs can be up to 75%, according to April Heinze, 9-1-1 and PSAP Operations Director for the National Emergency Number Association (NENA). This growing staffing shortage is reaching a critical level and has ramifications on the personal, professional, and organizational level for community emergency response capabilities.

When PSAPs are understaffed, several things happen, says Chris Fischer, Interim Deputy Director, Seattle 9-1-1 Center. "One, there is a delay in answering the incoming calls because there are not enough people to handle the volume of calls coming in," she says. "Two, there is a greater burden on the individuals taking the calls to provide the appropriate resources. And three, some community services that governing agencies expect PSAPs to offer the callers are put on pause to prioritize emergency call taking."

"And it's not just the burden of increased volume on individuals, it's the stress of those calls," explains Fischer. "It used to be that a fatal shooting was a rare bad call night... Now, fatal shootings are happening multiple times in a shift, and a 9-1-1 call taker listens to everything going on at the other end of the line."

Emergency telecommunications professionals may not be able to touch, smell or see what's happening at the

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RESPONDER WELLNESS

9-1-1 Telecommunications: More than just a stressful call

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other end of the line. But as the **first**, first responders on the scene, they hear things that stay with them for years to come.

The increasing violence of emergency calls and the burden of listening to what is occurring on the other end of the call, experiencing the trauma through the senses (without being the actual victim) is considered vicarious trauma.

Vicarious trauma is an occupational hazard for some professions. It's often seen in public safety as a risk factor for post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety.² April Heinze tells us that it's not only traumatizing to hear these increasingly violent calls, but frustrating for 9-1-1 call takers to not get resolution. These individuals rarely know if their actions made a difference in someone's life.

And while they do make a big difference, sometimes those efforts come with personal sacrifice.

Margie Moulin, retired Director, Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon tells us there has been a huge generational shift.

"Times are different. We are balancing a shift in emergency response," she says. "We have a generation that's been brought up understanding that self-care is a part of a healthy work-life balance, and that is important. At the same time, 9-1-1 is a high stress profession requiring long hours, overtime and a commitment to serving our communities through their most difficult times. It's not an easy job and finding the balance between taking care of those taking the call and meeting the expectations of those making the calls is often difficult."

Moulin, Heinze, Spross, and Fischer all agree that the current state of 9-1-1 professional telecommunicators is vastly different than the profession in which they started. But they also agree that professional organizations such as the [Association of Public Safety Communications Officials \(APCO\)](#) and the [National Emergency Number Association \(NENA\)](#) are committed to supporting these professionals who are the first to arrive on scene.

Both organizations have established wellness committees to address the most pressing wellness problems facing dispatch and strike the balance between effective organizations and the support of selfcare. Both organizations have joined the FirstNet

"It's not an easy job and finding the balance between taking care of those taking the call and meeting the expectations of those making the calls is often difficult."

– Margie Moulin
Director, Emergency Communications
of Southern Oregon

[Health and Wellness Coalition](#) to represent the interests of their constituents. They've also learned that sharing best practices and lessons learned is a means to learn from the activities of others and different actions that can make a difference in the wellness of first responders.

Moulin notes that APCO has established a wellness committee to identify those best practices and standards for all call centers. She believes any small change that incorporates wellness into an organization is a good one. That can mean a break room with a massage chair, meditation space or other wellness activities. Spross agrees. He suggests healthier food options for telecommunicators on the go. His dream is that communities support telecommunicators the same as fire fighters or police officers during their workday to address physical fitness. And Heinze wants to see 9-1-1 call takers embrace the purpose and passion of their profession.

"This is an old and honored profession," Heinze says. "When people realize the difference they make on the worst day of someone's life, that's wellness. That's purpose, pride and profession."

Fischer knows the wellness future of 9-1-1 telecommunicators rests with the people. After serving as past President of APCO, she came out of retirement to lead NENA's Wellness Committee and help the City of Seattle set up its new Community Safety/Communication Center.

"My commitment is to my people," Fischer says. "As a

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HURRICANE RESPONSE

Helping connect first responders for Hurricane Ian

After slamming the Florida coastline, Hurricane Ian battered the state with record flooding. Then it intensified and made landfall again in South Carolina over the weekend. Public safety – spanning federal, state, tribal and local agencies – quickly sprang into action. So far, public safety has requested FirstNet emergency support 100+ times for Ian. And we have been there for them each time.



By Jason Porter

President, Public Sector and FirstNet Program at AT&T

At FirstNet®, Built with AT&T, we prepare for the worst that mother nature can deliver. So, public safety can have the connectivity they require when it matters most. That's why America's first responders called for the creation of their own network – [FirstNet](#). And it's not a commercial network.

With FirstNet, public safety is our number one priority. We provide public safety agencies a level of support during emergencies that's far beyond anything they've previously experienced. We're the only provider with assets dedicated for exclusive use by public safety. And as public safety's partner, we'll continue to set the bar on what success looks like for network resiliency now and in the future.

Support after Hurricane Ian

After slamming the Florida coastline last Wednesday, Hurricane Ian battered the state with record flooding. Then it intensified and made landfall again in South Carolina over the weekend. Public safety – spanning federal, state, tribal and local agencies – quickly sprang into action. So far, public safety has requested FirstNet emergency support 100+ times for Ian. And we have been there for them each time.

Assets from the dedicated [FirstNet Fleet](#) have

supported first responders in affected areas, including Charlotte, Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Lee, Manatee, Orange and Sarasota counties in Florida and Charleston and Georgetown counties in South Carolina. Currently, there are 20+ assets on air. This includes portable cell sites, in-building solutions and satellites to provide backhaul to macro cell sites.

Now, sheriffs, firefighters, search and rescue teams and those providing mutual aid have the dedicated connectivity where they need it most.

Sanibel Island

On Sanibel Island, Ian ripped away several parts of the causeway that was the island's only access to Florida's mainland. Boats were the only way to reach the island. A Satellite Cell on Light Truck (SatCOLT) was too heavy to travel via the available boats. So, the team deployed a Compact Rapid Deployable ([CRD](#)), which is a lighter, new addition to the fleet that gives us greater flexibility to support public safety.

All of these assets link to FirstNet via satellite and do not rely on commercial power availability. This makes them ideal for search and rescue missions. The AT&T Network Disaster Recovery (NDR) team was able to load the CRD into the trunk of one of its Amphibious Vehicles (AVs), drive it to the channel and then engage the hydraulic

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HURRICANE RESPONSE

Helping connect first responders for Hurricane Ian

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drive system to motor and navigate like a boat across the water to the island.

North of Sanibel Island, the FirstNet team coordinated with federal agencies to deploy a CRD and other assets via a Blackhawk helicopter to Pine Island. First responders on the island had dedicated connectivity with Band 14 – that’s the nationwide, high-quality spectrum set aside specifically for FirstNet. And the team was able to turn on Wi-Fi calling to give residents connectivity on the AT&T network. In fact, just 5 minutes after the asset arrived, people were able to make urgent calls to let others know they were safe. These deployments help exemplify the power of the public-private partnership that created FirstNet.

Restoring cell sites

In addition to deploying FirstNet assets, the team has been expediting cell site restoration based on public safety’s needs, deploying generators and providing FirstNet Ready® devices to first responders on the ground.

And the [AT&T Weather Operations Center](#) (AWOC) has been in close collaboration with the FirstNet team to assess weather risk and help crews know when it’s safe to travel. Plus, FirstNet liaisons are embedded in state and federal Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) to help ensure first responders continue to have the mobile connectivity and devices they need.

FirstNet is built with AT&T in public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority ([FirstNet Authority](#)) – an independent agency within the federal government. It is the *only* purpose-built network designed with and for first responders to keep them connected no matter the mission. These are the individuals who run toward danger to help protect our families, friends and loved ones. Our hearts are with the communities affected by Hurricane Ian. And we’ll continue to *be there* for America’s first responders – today and for decades to come.

Additional Resources

Learn more about our response efforts and how we’re helping keep communities connected following Hurricane Ian here: go.att.com/ian.



In addition to deploying FirstNet assets, the team has been expediting cell site restoration based on public safety’s needs, deploying generators and providing FirstNet Ready® devices to first responders on the ground. And the AT&T Weather Operations Center (AWOC) has been in close collaboration.

FirstNet CRDs are also [available for agencies to own](#). A single person can deploy a CRD within minutes, giving them even more control of *their* network in an emergency.

For 140+ years, AT&T has used technology to keep people connected during disasters and life changing events. It’s why we’ve welcomed other carriers’ customers to roam on the AT&T network so we can stay #ConnectedTogether, even if their carrier’s service isn’t available after the storm.

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HURRICANE RESPONSE

Working in close collaboration with local telecom provider Liberty Mobile Puerto Rico Inc. and Liberty Mobile USVI Inc., we closely monitored the impact of the storm across Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI).



Keeping Puerto Rico responders connected as Fiona batters island

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keeping public safety connected on the island.

Working in close collaboration with local telecom provider Liberty Mobile Puerto Rico Inc. and Liberty Mobile USVI Inc., we closely monitored the impact of the storm across Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI).

Within 48 hours of the storm making landfall, the network in Puerto Rico had 83% of its cell sites operational, maintaining 99% of coverages, thanks to hundreds of generators across the network. Today, the network is fully operational.

Dedicated mobile cell sites

And in further testament to the resiliency of FirstNet, the network in the U.S. Virgin Islands was fully operational throughout the entire storm. While severe damage in Puerto Rico will take time to repair, public safety has dedicated, on-island mobile cell sites and unparalleled support from the FirstNet team at AT&T.

“Liberty is committed to keep providing the most reliable mobile service in Puerto Rico and USVI to the

first responder community when they need it most. We were ready to support first responders during Hurricane Fiona,” said Victor Vera, director of RAN Engineering at Liberty Mobile.

Coordinating with EOCs

We continue to coordinate efforts with the local Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs). And we’re supporting the communications needs of public safety on FirstNet – from on-island first responder agencies to FEMA and those providing mutual-aid support from the mainland. This includes everything from prioritizing cell site restoral to deploying in-building solutions in places like San Juan.

When the President surveyed storm damage, FirstNet was there to help connect on-island first responders supporting his visit. As public safety’s partner, we remain committed to keeping Puerto Rico’s first responder community connected.

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DISASTER RESPONSE

When wildfires spark, FirstNet response team is ready

By Fred Scalera

Director, Response Operations Group,
FirstNet Program at AT&T

A little fuel and a spark is all it takes for fire to blaze. Add some wind and you quickly have an inferno, threatening homes, structures and anything in its path. So, when disaster strikes, communications are critical to coordinating an effective response. [FirstNet®, Built with AT&T](#) – the *only* network built with and for America’s first responders – provides swift and agile support to firefighters protecting our communities.

And recognizing the increased frequency and destructiveness of these fires, we created a special Wildfire Response Team to help support first responders.

As public safety’s partner, we understand wildfires have unique challenges. That’s why we collaborated with the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA) to create a specialized team within the Response Operations Group to directly support wildfire response. Each of these highly trained wildland fire practitioners – about a dozen total – have first-hand experience operating in a fire command environment. Plus, FirstNet ROG has nearly 300 dedicated professionals nationwide, as well as



The Yeti Fire near Happy Camp, California created a need for a call to FirstNet on July 30. The steep mountain terrain, high winds and a fire that created its own weather system threatened the community.

Section Chiefs supporting the 10 FEMA regions.

“FirstNet is designed to be second-to-none in any emergency,” said Bryan Green, Region 10 Section Chief, for the FirstNet Response Operations Group at AT&T and a former Lieutenant with Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue and the City of Newberg Fire Department.

“Wildfires pose many unique challenges and our Wildfire Response team has the expertise and experience to

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HURRICANE RESPONSE

Keeping Puerto Rico responders connected as Fiona batters island

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safety goes, we go. And we’ll continue to *be there* for America’s first responders – today and for decades to come.

Additional Resources

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For 140+ years, AT&T has used technology to keep people connected during disasters and life changing events. It’s why we’ve welcomed other carriers’



customers to roam on the AT&T network so we can stay #ConnectedTogether, even if their carrier’s service isn’t available after the storm.

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integrate with incident command management and communication leads.”

Wildfire response requests

So far this year, FirstNet has **responded to more than 60 wildfire response requests** in 13 states, including:

Lightning Strikes in Washington: On July 18, FirstNet got a request for additional connectivity support. Lightning started the Stayman Flats fire scorching 1,200 acres in steep canyons – and threatening homes. In the canyons, the initial attack crews did not have LMR radio connectivity. They called on FirstNet for help and the FirstNet team deployed a dedicated FirstNet Satellite Cell on Light Truck (SatCOLT) in the middle of the night to provide mission-critical communications for fire suppression coordination.

Yosemite Burns: The Washburn Fire burned nearly 5,000 acres in the National Park, threatening historic buildings, campgrounds and the giant sequoias. On behalf of public safety, FirstNet deployed 3 SatCOLTs to provide priority communications for Incident Command, the briefing area and fire operations – all at no additional charge. The FirstNet team also was onsite to deliver FirstNet Ready® devices for first responders in the field, giving them unthrottled access to *their* network.

The **Yeti Fire near Happy Camp, California.** This fire created a need for a call to FirstNet on July 30. The steep mountain terrain, high winds and a fire that created its own weather system threatened the community along the river ravine. Escape routes were changing by the minute. The challenging terrain for firefighters made situational awareness planning even more crucial for their safety. The newly created Wildfire Response Team rolled out 2 Compact Rapid Deployables (CRDs) and a SatCOLT for priority communications. The fire has burned more than 7,000 acres to date.

These are just a few examples of the wildfires FirstNet responded to this year alone.

Our intimate understanding of the public safety mission is providing the more than 21,800 agencies on FirstNet with unparalleled emergency support.

FirstNet ROG guides the deployment of network solutions based on the needs of public safety,



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coordinating across federal, state, local and tribal agencies with a focus on life safety, incident stabilization and property conservation. In addition to the 150+ dedicated assets in the nationwide FirstNet fleet – including SatCOLTs, CRDs and the new Communications Vehicles – public safety can tap into the 300+ assets from the AT&T Network Disaster Recovery fleet when available.

We’ve **deployed more than 700 full scale solutions** to support first responders across the country – helping them stay connected. From expediting network restoration and providing in-building connectivity to rolling out the FirstNet fleet, we’re working to help them operate faster, safer and more effectively when lives are on the line. It’s just one more reason public safety’s network is a cut above the rest.

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leader, I need to help people in the position of making decisions to make the right decision to care for these professionals. And help them not just in teaching them how to use the technology or triage calls, but in how they take care of themselves. It's just as important to invest in the people who answer the call versus the technical systems they use."

To learn more about wellness efforts, visit [NENA](#), [APCO](#) and [FirstNet.com](#).

Margie Moulin began her career as a 9-1-1 Telecommunicator at a center in Southern Oregon. Through the next 15 years, she worked as a telecommunicator, communications training officer, dispatch supervisor, operations manager and assistant director. She's spent the last 16 years as the director of the Emergency Communications Center in Southern Oregon (ECSO9-1-1). Margie began her membership with APCO in 1994 and has served at both the chapter and national levels. She served as the president of the Oregon Chapter in 2006, and as the APCO International president (2020-2021).

April Heinze ENP, CMCP is the 9-1-1 and PSAP Operations Director for NENA: The 9-1-1 Association. She supports the NENA development group with operational standards and best practices. She educates, advises, and advocates for 9-1-1 and PSAP operational issues on behalf of NENA with various industry associations and governmental entities. Before joining NENA, April spent 24 years in a PSAP in Michigan. She began as a public safety telecommunicator and worked her way up to director. She was then recruited by an NG9-1-1 provider and spent nearly three years as a PSAP liaison and industry advocate.

Mark Spross has over 31 years of public safety service starting as a Telecommunicator for Douglas County, Oregon in 1991. Since then, Mark has worked in two PSAP's as telecommunicator and continued in public safety as a deputy sheriff, emergency manager, 9-1-1 operations supervisor, technical manager, operations manager and currently serves as an executive director for an ECC in Marion County, Oregon. Mark has been a member of APCO and NENA and was elected as the vice president of the Oregon Chapter in 2011 going on to serve as the president in 2012 and 2013. He continues to be active with the chapter by serving on the legislative committee and serves as the Oregon Executive Council Representative with APCO.



Interoperability with FirstNet enables redundancy, resiliency and agility with AT&T ESInet so PSAPs can focus on keeping their communities safe. If AT&T ESInet detects a disruption to the primary connection of a 9-1-1 call center, it

Chris Fischer began her career as a 9-1-1 telecommunicator for the Renton Police Department and then moved to Valley Communications Center as a part of a regional consolidation effort in South King County, WA. She served as telecommunicator, supervisor, deputy director and was the executive director for 20 years. She served APCO as chair of the Com Center Standards Committee and was elected to the Board of Officers of APCO and served as president in 2009-2010. She currently co-chairs the NENA Wellness Committee and is serving as the interim deputy director of CSCC/City of Seattle 9-1-1.

Dr. Anna Fitch Courie, director of Responder Wellness, FirstNet Program at AT&T is a nurse, Army wife, university faculty, and author. Dr. Courie has worked for over 25 years in the health care profession including bone marrow transplant, intensive care, U.S. Army Public Health, and Health Promotion practice. Dr. Courie holds a Bachelor's in Nursing from Clemson University; a Master's in Nursing Education from the University of Wyoming; and a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Ohio State University. Dr. Courie's area of expertise is integration of public health strategy across disparate organizations to achieve health improvement goals.

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¹ [Public Safety Telecommunicators : Occupational Outlook Handbook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](#)

² [What is Vicarious Trauma? | The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit | OVC \(ojp.gov\)](#)