

FirstNet to Meet with State, Local, Tribal Public Safety Groups

Rachelle Chong | May 9, 2013



A grueling process begins May 15-16 in Washington, D.C. for the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet), which kicks off a summer long series of consultations with states, tribal entities, territories and local authorities across the nation. After the D.C. workshop, FirstNet will conduct six regional workshops and will meet with each state individually during the consultation process.

Meeting some recent pointed criticisms, including from one of its own board members, about outreach to public safety, FirstNet will be soliciting public input from workshop attendees to help in the design of a public safety grade, next generation wireless network that will meet very specific requirements of police, firefighters, sheriffs, and emergency medical services personnel in their regions. These first responders may have different needs depending on their regions, dealing with a wide range of possible emergencies ranging from terrorist attacks, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, tornados, wildfires, and the like.

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FirstNet announced that the regional workshops will be a two-day program beginning with the discussion of the changing nature of public safety since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York. The agenda includes an update on FirstNet progress, an interactive session on network development, multiple facilitated discussions between FirstNet and attendees, and stakeholder break-out sessions addressing specific challenges of implementing a public safety broadband network, including discussions between attendees and FirstNet and group-to-group peer exchanges. FirstNet Board member Jeffrey Johnson, a retired fire chief, said it is hoped that attendees will share information about their coverage and capacity needs, and the wireless assets and infrastructure they can bring to the table.

Schedule of Regional Workshops By Geographical Area

May 15-16	Washington D.C.	Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, Virginia and West Virginia
May 21-22	Denver, Colorado	Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming
May 29-30	San Francisco, California	Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, North Mariana Islands, Oregon and Washington State
June 12-13	St. Louis, Missouri	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin
June 19-20	Boston, Massachusetts	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont
June 26-27	Memphis, Tennessee	Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana,

Mississippi, North Carolina,
Oklahoma, South Carolina,
Tennessee, and Texas

As background, in February 2012, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (the Act) was passed, mandating the creation of a nationwide, interoperable wireless broadband network. The Act created the First Responder Network Authority, an independent authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). FirstNet is to build, deploy and operate a single, nationwide interoperable public safety long-term evolution mobile broadband network. The Act allotted more than \$7 billion in federal grants to develop the network, as well as \$135 million for a new State and Local Implementation Grant Program (SLIGP) administered by NTIA to support state, regional, tribal and local jurisdictions efforts to plan and work with FirstNet. The recipients of the SLIGP grants must contribute at least 20 percent of the planning funding. Applications were due to NTIA from the states and territories by March 19, 2013, with grants expected by July 15, 2013.

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