

**NetMotion software may shape FirstNet network deployment**

Fierce Wireless Tech By Nicole Blanchard

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Mobile network software developer NetMotion said its mobile virtual private network (VPN) software, NetMotion Diagnostics, is allowing public safety officials as well as FirstNet (the designated nationwide first responders' network) experts to assess mobile networks for latency issues, poor signal areas and more prior to the implementation of FirstNet coverage.

NetMotion executives said the data could influence the buildout of FirstNet's network, as well as the number of state governments that choose to "opt out" of FirstNet's offering and instead provide their own coverage, which must meet a rigorous compatibility standard.

"It helps [first responders] to inform FirstNet folks to say, 'Here's where FirstNet could help us with service,'" said John Knopf, NetMotion's VP of product. "Or it will allow them to bring that plan B to Washington" and deploy a better coverage option.

The company announced Tuesday that its Diagnostics version 3.2 is already in use by "partners that are either preparing for FirstNet, or some that are actively in trials right now," Knopf said.

Due to FirstNet's need to offer coverage in rural, often under-serviced areas, the diagnostics provide insight into regions where public safety officers would be unable to access regular networks when responding to emergencies. The data from NetMotion's diagnostics, Knopf said, will help determine those gaps and "create a coverage map down to a specific device level."

Currently, the software covers two trunk-mounted modems -- Harris Corp MBC-200 LTE mobile router and the Motorola VML 750 vehicle modem -- being used in early FirstNet trials. Knopf said the company plans on keeping pace with vendors as FirstNet implements a variety of other vehicular network systems.

"We do anticipate of the coming years offering support for FirstNet-specific hardware," Knopf

said.

In fact, he added, the device specificity is such that vendors approached NetMotion for coverage on their FirstNet-oriented equipment.

"Customers are able to determine deficiencies in antenna placement on a car," added senior product manager Steve Fallin, explaining that determining coverage issues on a smaller scale may save networks time and money.

"Because tower infrastructure is expensive to deploy, states and agencies that know what and where their needs are will help ensure everyone gets the most utility out of their joint investment," a NetMotion press release said.

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