

FirstNet works around lack of data, applications standards

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Open, standards-based technology is the backbone of what will be a nationwide public safety broadband network, but standards aren't available for all aspects of what is needed for interoperability.

Specifically, standards exist for network infrastructure and services but not for data access and applications, which could complicate communications, Mark Golaszewski, director of applications at the First Responder Network Authority, wrote in [a Dec. 16 blog post](#) .

His team is building on guidance issued in [a 2012 report](#) on minimum technical requirements for interoperability on the network. Golaszewski said infrastructure and services, and data access and applications are central to FirstNet's strategy "for maximizing interoperability across the nationwide public safety broadband network."

"Given the diversity of unique network, data and applications solutions that exist for over 60,000 public safety agencies, FirstNet cannot ensure that all users will be able to access or interoperate across all legacy solutions," Golaszewski wrote. "However, by driving toward open, standards-based solutions, FirstNet envisions vastly improving the public safety user experience when it comes to new communications services, data access and applications."

To that end, FirstNet wants to take a multifaceted approach, including, he wrote:

- Adopting data and interoperability standards when they become available.
- Encouraging app developers to create middleware solutions that provide seamless access to data that might lack an open, standards-based definition.
- Publishing and standardizing application programming interfaces that enable the creation of apps that leverage network functions such as priority and pre-emption for first responders at times of crisis.
- Using Identity, Credential and Access Management for user authentication and authorization across jurisdictions.
- Creating a developer ecosystem that fosters collaboration and communication between

app creators and public safety users.

- Implementing an application test and certification process.
- Encouraging interagency mutual aid agreements to provide for joint use, training and interoperability between agencies that work together often.

The report, written by the Technical Advisory Board for First Responder Interoperability, recommends relying on standards-based network elements, interfaces and technologies of the Third Generation Partnership Project. That is crucial to building a solid foundation for interoperability, Golaszewski wrote.

"Adherence to these open and global standards creates the basis for a wireless broadband network that will enable the interoperability of devices, radio access networks (RANs), and core network elements that leverage ever-evolving, commercially available products and services," he wrote. "This is anticipated to result in a quantum leap forward in the interoperability and cost-effectiveness of public safety communications."

But no standards exist for data access and applications, and the interoperability board did not include them in its minimum technical requirements. That creates the potential for problems, Golaszewski wrote, because a standards-based wireless network addresses voice communications but "does not ensure interoperable access to the data and applications that are second nature to most smartphone users."

FirstNet was established by the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012.

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