

FirstNet reviews 2015 progress

Fierce Government IT By Molly Bernhart Walker

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The First Responder Network Authority, or FirstNet, said 2015 was a year of significant progress in its effort to build out a nationwide public safety broadband network.

In a blog post published late last month, FirstNet Board Vice Chair Jeff Johnson [said](#) the group has now completed initial consultations with first responders and other stakeholders in 55 states and territories.

FirstNet's outreach and consultation team participated in more than 220 engagements, involving more than 27,000 stakeholders in fiscal year 2015, according to the post.

For example, the group most recently [shared findings](#) from its consultation in Guam that highlighted the unique public safety needs of an island territory. Such consultations inform and shape the design of the network, said Johnson.

"We need to know how first responders prepare for and respond to emergencies of all sizes to improve communications, coordination and situational awareness during emergency response operations," he wrote.

During initial consultations, many participants provide specific examples of times a dedicated nationwide public safety broadband network could have improved a fire rescue or provided faster emergency response.

2015 also marked the approval of key elements of FirstNet's request for proposal to deploy the network and its adoption of a national acquisition strategy. The group also issued a notice, requesting feedback on how to bake in cybersecurity as a foundation of the network, said Johnson.

Last year, FirstNet welcomed several senior advisors and appointed Mike Poth as FirstNet's chief executive and TJ Kennedy as president.

Priorities that took shape in 2015 and will continue to be a focus for the group in 2016 include research into different indoor location technologies.

"FirstNet views in-building coverage as a critical part of public-safety users' needs in the field; solving in-building coverage will improve operations and the safety of first responders," said Johnson.

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