

FirstNet to 911 leaders: Call your SPOC

Urgent Communications By Jill Nolin

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Public-safety answering point ([PSAP](#)) leaders have a role to play in the development of the nationwide public-safety broadband network, [FirstNet](#) Outreach Director Amanda Hilliard said in a webinar.

Contacting the respective [single point of contact](#) (SPOC) is a good way for emergency-calling service leaders in each state to become involved in the ongoing consultation process, Hilliard said in the National 911 Program's ["State of 911" webinar](#) last month.

"I would encourage you, if you're not already familiar with your state single point of contact, to get to know that person," she said.

Appointed by the governor of each state and territory, the SPOC is FirstNet's go-to person for each jurisdiction. The SPOCs also receive regular updates about FirstNet's plans.

Hilliard talked about the goals FirstNet shares with those leading the effort to transition the 911 community to IP-based technologies. That includes a mutual interest in modernizing communications systems, so telecommunicators and first responders can access and relay information in multiple formats.

It is clear that FirstNet and [next-generation 911](#) need each other, but what's still unclear is how intertwined these systems will become.

Hilliard was asked during the webinar if the FirstNet network might be used as the backbone for a state Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet) for next-generation 911. She said that while the systems will need to work closely together, it's too early in the process to discern how that

might happen technically.

“There clearly has to be integration between the two systems, because we want to ensure that as the NG 911 network evolves and you have the public sending photos or videos to the dispatch centers, we need to ensure that the telecommunicators have the capacity and the network in place to get that out to the responder in the field who might need that,” Hilliard said.

While similar in some ways, the two systems would serve very different purposes, according to Roger Hixson, who is the technical director for the [National Emergency Number Association](#) (NENA).

Notably, next-gen 911 runs on a dedicated IP network that is terrestrial and supports emergency communications between the public and PSAPs, Hixson said. Meanwhile, FirstNet primarily will operate a wireless broadband network for communications among dispatchers, first responders and others.

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