

New Mexico Agrees with Interior to Share Towers for FirstNet

Radio Resource Media Group By Staff

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New Mexico, one of five early builders with spectrum lease agreements with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet), is leveraging the assets of federal agencies that operate in the state and partnering with another early builder for its core network services.

New Mexico has negotiated a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Department of Interior and will use the document as a foundation for an agreement with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The border security collaborative effort with CBP, in particular, will focus on the identification of illegal incursions and the integration of real-time sensor data to aid in interdiction and arrest.

New Mexico will provide network access to federal responders, with a focus on border security. The state plans to use up to eight existing state or local and four federally owned towers to provide Long Term Evolution (LTE) service to state, local and federal agencies.

In addition, New Mexico is developing the capability to use enhanced packet core (EPC) services from the early builder network in Harris County, Texas. With Harris County prepared to act as the host core, New Mexico is identifying and addressing a number of key factors associated with integrating remote radio access networks (RAN) into core networks, including technical, schedule and cost considerations.

Members of the FirstNet management team visited Las Cruces, New Mexico, to meet with state officials about planning for the state's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP)-funded public-safety broadband network. The network is expected to be operational in mid-2015.

FirstNet focused New Mexico's key learning conditions for this project around assessing:

- The feasibility of hosting a single EPC among multiple RANs
- Spectrum management and use issues along the southwest border with Mexico
- Sharing of use among federal and state organizations

“In collaborating with New Mexico on these key issues, the FirstNet team is learning much about RAN build challenges in high-desert geographies, as well as challenges associated with managing across the many partners involved in one of the more complex EB programs,” said [a FirstNet blog](#)

“As with the other early builder projects, FirstNet looks forward to continuing to evaluate the lessons learned from the New Mexico project to help inform planning for the nationwide public-safety broadband network.”

New Mexico was one of seven public-safety BTOP awardees in 2010, receiving a \$38.7 million grant. The public-safety BTOP grants were later suspended pending a spectrum lease agreement with FirstNet. Only four of the BTOP jurisdictions, along with Harris County, negotiated agreements with FirstNet and are early builders for the network. The other three early builders are New Jersey; Adams County, Colorado; and the Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System Authority (LA-RICS).

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