ICN **Iowa Communications Network**

icn.iowa.gov

ICN Joins with FirstNet® to Deliver Backup Connections for Public Safety

Redundant Secondary Connections for Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) and Iowa's Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)

Des Moines (03/15/2021) – Iowa Communications Network (ICN) is partnering with Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HSEMD) to use FirstNet, Built with AT&T as the backup connection for Iowa-based Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) providing 9-1-1 services to Iowans. FirstNet is the only nationwide, high-speed broadband communications platform dedicated to and purpose-built for America's first responders and the extended public safety community. ICN has deployed FirstNet LTE connections to 24 PSAPs, harnessing the robust capabilities of FirstNet and enabling emergency dispatchers to share critical information about the scene of an incident to first responders in a highly secure manner.

Currently, the ICN is used as the primary network provider for HSEMD and the 113 Iowa based PSAPs. In the event the primary traffic route for 9-1-1 calls is damaged, the 24 PSAP connections will reroute to the FirstNet network to wirelessly connect redundant routers back to the PSAPs. HSEMD and ICN are expected to add additional PSAPs with the same configuration in the future.

Congressionally mandated, FirstNet is built through a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership between the federal government and AT&T. It provides first responder communications always-on priority and preemption across voice and data. In 2017, Iowa was the fifth state to opt-in to FirstNet, and since then AT&T has blanketed the state with public safety's Band 14 – high-quality spectrum set aside by the federal government specifically for FirstNet – and launched new, purpose-built FirstNet cell sites to connect rural and remote areas. David Barnett, Iowa's FirstNet Consultant said, "The new FirstNet infrastructure is not only in major cities like Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, but also in smaller communities like Spencer and Estherville. Rural counties and rural sheriffs need communications just like the big cities. This is a huge project to take on to make sure the responders and agencies that support first responders have the network they need."

ICN is using the FirstNet infrastructure to provide a separate, redundant network for 9-1-1 traffic. ICN's Sales Engineer Mike Lauer said, "FirstNet supplies supporting agencies the ability to review tower information, which made deployment of the backup LTE connections easier. FirstNet has provided a lot of tools to help answer equipment questions about external antennas, line of sight issues, vertical interferences, etc."

ICN's RAN (Radio Access Network) deployment is unique for FirstNet, since it encompasses multiple sites and spans the entire State. Larry Ewert, Principal Architect with the FirstNet Program at AT&T said, "There are smaller projects that are similar to what ICN has deployed, but overall from an implementation perspective, ICN's project is the largest of its type and is setting an example for other states."

ICN established a separate virtual private network within the FirstNet infrastructure, which provides redundant connections for disaster recovery used for wireless and wireline 9-1-1 services. "Ensuring there is a communications system in place that is redundant is our number one priority. There is no room for error when routing 9-1-1 data traffic," adds Lauer.

In 2017, HSEMD began an initiative to help the 113 PSAPs share equipment across centers. Blake DeRouchey, 9-1-1 Program Manager for HSEMD, explains that this was a cost saving measure for

PSAPs by eliminating the need to fund their own individual call answering equipment through the use of shared technology, with no degradation of service or negative impact to the call takers. The PSAPs remote equipment is connected to the State's host equipment through the ICN.

"Adding FirstNet to the shared services environment helps ensure PSAPs continue to receive their calls even if the primary ICN connection goes down," said DeRouchey. The system setup provides a second, disparate connection to the 9-1-1 Network. DeRouchey adds, "At the end of the day, when someone calls 9-1-1, they expect to talk to a public safety telecommunicator 100% of the time. Our work with FirstNet makes that expectation more of a reality."

The ICN is made up of approximately 3,400 miles of owned fiber optics reaching all 99 counties statewide, with leased connections making up the remaining miles of the network. Deploying a wireless backup service using FirstNet moves the ICN forward in the wireless arena, and gives our public safety users peace of mind that the system is resilient and redundant.

To learn more about the value FirstNet is bringing to public safety, check out FirstNet.com.

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About Iowa Communications Network (ICN)

The ICN provides high-speed Internet, data, voice, security, and consultation services. The ICN transport network is 100% fiber, which is the leading technology for telecommunications networks. https://icn.iowa.gov

About FirstNet, Built with AT&T

FirstNet® is the only nationwide, high-speed broadband communications platform dedicated to and purpose-built for America's first responders and the extended public safety community. Shaped by the vision of Congress and the first responder community following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, FirstNet stands above commercial offerings. It is built with AT&T in public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) – an independent agency within the federal government. The FirstNet network is providing public safety with truly dedicated coverage and capacity when they need it, unique benefits like *always-on* priority and preemption, and high-quality Band 14 spectrum. These advanced capabilities enable FirstNet to help fire, EMS, law enforcement save lives and protect their communities. Learn more at FirstNet.com.