



WI DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS RELEASE: Gov. Walker approves buildout plan for first responder network, transforms communications for public safety  
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Gov. Scott Walker today agreed for the state of Wisconsin to join a nationwide public safety broadband network to help improve how first responders communicate across the state.

The First Responder Network Authority, or FirstNet, is leading the national broadband advanced technology initiative to help improve public safety communications.

“Clear and reliable communications is essential for first responders to do their jobs effectively,” Walker said. “This new partnership provides crucial, secure and robust broadband access to our first responders and public safety personnel to help them save lives when every second counts. I look forward to FirstNet and AT&T implementing their plan and its widespread positive effect in protecting Wisconsin’s communities.”

Wisconsin is among several states to "opt in" to the FirstNet plan. AT&T is developing the national FirstNet plan, which includes building Long-Term Evolution with high-speed wireless communications for mobile devices and data terminals. In addition, more towers will be built with a focus on rural areas in the state to help with interoperability communications. There is no cost to the state of Wisconsin.

"FirstNet is a great step toward bringing faster and more reliable emergency communications capabilities to every corner of Wisconsin," said Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general, who is responsible for the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs and its statewide interoperability programs. "When the tornado hits or floodwaters rise, our first responders are there helping citizens, and we need to make sure they have the tools necessary to communicate and to ensure interoperability in the state."

After a thorough review, the state of Wisconsin Interoperability Council — which consists of representatives from various state first responder organizations — approved a recommendation to Walker to support the FirstNet plan.

“This is a great day for first responders across Wisconsin and the residents they serve,” said Kewaunee County Sheriff Matt Joski, chair of the Wisconsin State Interoperability Council. “By joining the FirstNet network, the governor has opened the door to enhanced technology that will improve emergency services and response times. From Pleasant Prairie to Cassville and Kewaunee to Webster, this service will help public safety better serve our citizens.”

Wisconsin’s statewide interoperability programs were consolidated under the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs as part of the 1017-19 state budget signed into law earlier this year.

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