

Newsletter

February 28, 2019

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Supporting you through a year of emergencies

2018 was the first full year of FirstNet operation. During this year we supported more than 200 events and emergency operations. See how first responders used FirstNet during the year's hurricanes, floods, fires and other disasters.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

New features for FirstNet users

Advanced Messaging, the next generation of messaging services **launched Feb. 28, 2019** on the LG v35 and the Samsung GS7, with Samsung GS7 Edge and the GS7 Active following soon thereafter. We expect to add these services to other devices during 2019.

Advanced Messaging delivers an all-IP, standards-based messaging platform, expanding native features beyond traditional Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS). **With Advanced Messaging, you get:**

- Increased file transfer size of
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Texas City ISD: Prepared for any emergency



Third in a three-part series on Texas City Independent School District

Texas City Independent School District assigned FirstNet Ready™ phones to its superintendent, principals and assistant principals. No matter the emergency, they will be able to communicate with first responders. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

“FirstNet has been instrumental in us developing what I believe is a gold standard for school safety...”

By Dr. Rodney Cavness
Superintendent, Texas City ISD

As a school administrator, I've studied school safety and security for 30 years. And for 30 years, we've led from the rear. We've made our plans based on where other people made mistakes. And that's a foolish way to lead. But that's all we had.

That's no longer the case. FirstNet has been instrumental in us developing – and implementing – what we believe is a gold standard of school safety and security. FirstNet keeps first responders



connected; it keeps us connected to first responders. And I find a great deal of comfort in knowing that.

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FirstNet helping us develop a “gold standard for school safety...”

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Finding the right solution

When we started looking at reinforcing school safety and hired [Mike Matranga](#), now the executive director of safety and security for the school district, we decided we were going to have the gold standard for Texas. Vet every product. Exhaust every resource we had to find the right solution.

We looked at the data and the findings from previous school shootings. We found that one of the problems districts, or schools, or businesses have had is that so many people were on their cell phones you didn't have cell service. And as Mike Matranga says, the key part of any active shooter response or [disaster response is communication](#).

Our school board was very supportive. They understood that they're not safety and security people. And they've shown great leadership throughout this process, letting us do what needs to be done.

Because in a school environment, we've got to be able to respond quickly and effectively. We've got to communicate from and to the command post. We've got to communicate with media. We've got to communicate with parents.

There's a long list of things that go into this. But FirstNet has got to be a key component of any school's safety and security plan.

Keeping students safe

FirstNet has also been very positive with our school liaison officers. They understand the importance of a good, clear line of communication with other members of the team, with the administration, with this office, for our safety and security plan.

We've become very focused on school shootings. But living on the Gulf Coast and in a community with multiple refineries, we need to be prepared for other types of incidents. If we have some type of situation at



Our administrative staff and our law enforcement officers need peace of mind, so they can focus on the important things, says Matranga.

one of the refineries – a fire, an explosion on a barge, a chemical release – FirstNet keeps us connected. So, we can communicate with law enforcement, fire and other responding agencies instantly and get the information we need to [keep students safe](#). That's going to speed up our response time. It's going to help us get kids out of buildings, or evacuate, or lock down, or whatever we need to do.

When communication breaks down, the plan fails. Because if you can't communicate, you can't activate your plan and have people where you need them.

Being a parent, of course, I worry about my daughter. But I feel a lot safer with her at school this year than I did a year ago.

Dr. Rodney Cavness is the Superintendent for the City of Texas City Independent School District, with 14 schools, and 9,000 students. He has 30 years of experience in education, including as superintendent and CEO of Port Neches Groves ISD in Port Neches, in Evadale ISD in the Beaumont/Port Arthur area. Dr. Cavness holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology; a Master's in Education Administration from Lamar University and a Doctorate in Administration and Supervision from the University of Houston.

Want to learn more about how the Texas City ISD is using FirstNet?

Read the blogs:

- [When it comes to security, communication is top priority for Texas City school district](#)

By Mike Matranga, Executive Director of Security, Texas City ISD

- [FirstNet – the network “too good to be true” is helping simplify communications](#)

By Sgt. Randall Johnston, Texas City Police

- [“It's got to work for us, it's got to be reliable and it's got to be there for us when we need it”](#)

By Sgt. Derik Fillmore, Galveston County Sheriff's Office, School Liaison Division

And watch the videos:

- [Teaming up for student safety](#)
- [A case for student safety](#)
- [Prepared for any emergency](#)

“It's got to work for us, it's got to be reliable and it's got to be there for us when we need it.”

By Sgt. Derik Fillmore
Galveston County Sheriff's Office
School Liaison Division

Communication is key in our role as school liaison officers with the Texas City Independent School District.

From dealing with daily issues that arise on campus to responding to an emergency, I need to be able to communicate with my responding deputies.

And FirstNet is the tool that's helping [to keep us connected](#). As law enforcement, we depend on whatever equipment we have at that time. So, it's got to work for us, it's got to be reliable. And it's got to be there for us when we need it.

Because when the technology doesn't work in an emergency, that just makes the situation that much worse.

Keeping students, staff safe

On any given day, you'll find me at each of the four campuses in my cluster – talking with principals and assistant principals, checking on deputies, securing doors. Making sure that we're visible and communicating with the staff and the students on the campus.

At the same time, we're building a rapport with the students. We're learning to recognize when things aren't quite right. And we're earning their trust. They know they can come to us when they're in trouble.

That reaffirms to them that we're here to ensure they have a safe and secure school day. I want them to know they can go to school and learn and teach without having to worry about an outside intruder.



Sgt. Derik Fillmore works for the Galveston County Sheriff's Office, School Liaison Division and supervises five deputies who work at campuses across the Texas City Independent School District.

With FirstNet I know that I have that reliable communication when I need it. I don't have to worry about being at a large event or an emergency situation happening and not being able to make phone calls or receive text messages or send text messages.

Prepared for any emergency

The risk of the communications technology not working would be catastrophic. We have 14 campuses within the district. And we have to be prepared for any emergency. That could be fire, weather, medical emergencies, a possible intruder on campus or any number of other situations that could come up.

We have a remote campus where we've had problems with cell service in the past.

Since moving to FirstNet, that has greatly improved, where now we can have that communication with the campus administrators and the deputy on that campus.

I'm not a tech person, but I found this FirstNet-enabled device no harder to use than my everyday cell phone.

And as a dad with two kids in the district, I feel really comfortable the district is putting these layers of security in place. It lets me know that the district cares – that they're going with companies that have a reputation for providing quality service and reliable products to ensure the safety and security of students.

Other agencies that have not explored developing a relationship with FirstNet should do it. This is a network that was built for first responders – with first responders in mind to help us communicate.

Sgt. Derik Fillmore is with the Galveston County Sheriff's Office, School Liaison Division. He supervises four campuses in the Texas City Independent School District and five deputies who work at those campuses. He has served 15 years in law enforcement and holds Master Peace Officer and Field Training Officer licenses from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement.

The Samsung Galaxy S9 

Now just **\$0.99/mo**
with new activation on AT&T Next^{®*}

*Ltd time. Not avail. in Massachusetts. Select locations only. Avail. only to elig. employees and volunteers of qualified Primary User Public Safety Entities who activate as a new Subscriber Paid User. Must purch. new Samsung Galaxy S9 on AT&T Next for new line w/ elig. voice & data svc (min. \$28.50/mo. On FirstNet Mobile-First Responder Plan for Mobile Smartphone. Other qual. Plans avail.). Credits start w/in 3 bills. If svc cancelled, device balance due. \$30 activation, add'l fees, taxes & other charges, limits & restr's apply. See offer details.



Keeping first responders connected, watching their back helps to keep family and community safe

Editor's Note: This article is part of an ongoing series of profiles on the people and faces behind the FirstNet Program at AT&T and what motivates them every day.

For Michael Hart, doing the best job he can for the first responders he serves daily is all about family and community.

“By working for first responders, I’m looking out for the people I love,” says Hart, a member of the FirstNet Program at AT&T, a husband and a father of three. “They’re the ones who are going to be taking care of my family in a crisis. So, I need to take care of them. I’m just passing on some of that same good will.”

A Texas native, Hart began working for AT&T in 2006. By 2015, he was managing several large government and education customers.

“And that’s really where I fell in love with supporting public safety,” he says. “For me to see that I could play a role in keeping people safe by providing effective communications, that was the drug. I wanted to be a part of it.”

He credits many mentors for giving him the break he needed at the right time and helping him “become a part of FirstNet,” he says. “And I’m extremely grateful for that.”

Chasing FirstNet

Later in 2015, Hart says, he had an opportunity to join a county agency outside AT&T – to further FirstNet “with business development and land mobile radio systems.” So, he jumped at the chance.

“Before AT&T was eventually awarded the national contract, the county agency had hoped to offer FirstNet as a service,” he says. “And they wanted me to strengthen existing and new customer relationships and be the point of contact for various communication strategies.”



SPOTLIGHT
PROFILE

Michael
Hart

“By working for first responders, I’m looking out for the people I love.”

Two years later, after AT&T won the contract to build the nation’s first ever nationwide public safety network, Hart returned to work on the FirstNet Program at AT&T.

When duty calls

He hit the ground running about a month before Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf Coast.

“I was finishing setting up their emergency operations center,” says Hart. “So, I ended up staying over for about two weeks after the hurricane hit. We put mission critical applications to use. We hit over 14 different retail stores to get iPads to deliver to the office of emergency management. We deployed assets like Satellite Cells on Light Trucks. And we monitored the network.

“Honestly, I was there to go grab coffee if that’s what they needed,” Hart adds.

And that’s pretty much how a typical day goes for him. He can be presenting to groups of first responders; strategizing with internal teams on achieving objectives; and on hand for planned events.

He goes where he’s needed to get the job done. Part of what Hart wants to convey to first responders is that he’s got their back.

“At the end of the day, that’s something

that first responders rely on,” he says. “That’s what they expect from their fellow brethren. And FirstNet is a form of that. We’ve got their back.”

Built for first responders

He also wants them to know that FirstNet is the communications platform they fought for – and have been asking for, for a long time. Built on its own exclusive public safety core, FirstNet has the capabilities they want.

This includes priority and preemption, an applications ecosystem, deployable assets, and mission critical services – all required by the government contract.

Hart says he tells his clients that they should consider it a missed opportunity to not be a part of something they’ve been asking for. FirstNet is “unprecedented,” he adds.

“It wasn’t until I got my first incident – where I truly needed a deployable and needed the company to move – that I realized how incredible it really is,” he says. “I’ve been in the wireless industry for 15 years, worked with several other carriers and have never seen anything like this before.”

New features for FirstNet users

(Continued from page 1)

up to 100MB

- Open Group Chat (OGC) of up to 30 participants at launch, evolving up to 100 group size
- Ability to add/remove users from a chat thread without the need to start a new message thread
- Ability to store & forward text and multimedia to offline users for up to 72 hours (similar to SMS/MMS)

Access Local Control from FirstNet.com: Now you can access Local Control directly from FirstNet.com. Just click on the **Sign in now** link at the top right-hand corner of the page, then enter your credentials.

Network Status Map: Customers will see three enhancements to the Network Status Map **starting Feb. 25**, including to the:

- **Alerts:** Giving you notice of unplanned outages or service interruptions with email and SMS alerts
- **Administrator dashboard:** To show planned network maintenance with ability to filter based on geographic areas. Maintenance notifications limited to FirstNet dedicated assets with planned maintenance that could cause a service interruption.

LOCAL CONTROL

FIRSTNET
Built with AT&T

Administration Network Training

Administration Dashboard / Planned Maintenance Dashboard

Planned Maintenance Dashboard

To view planned maintenance in your area, select a state and a market. [View FEMA regions map](#)

State: California

Market Name: San Francisco

CANCEL VIEW PLANNED MAINTENANCE

- **Geographic Subscription:** Giving administrators the option to subscribe to a smaller geographical area. Administrators can now subscribe to alerts within a given market area.

Learn to efficiently and effectively manage your FirstNet wireless services online. Instructor-led courses help you learn to manage your administrative needs for FirstNet wireless services. Plus, you'll have a great opportunity to ask questions and get answers from the instructor in real-time. [REGISTER TODAY](#)