



## ILLINOIS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

**Bruce Rauner**  
Governor

**William P. Robertson**  
Acting Director

March 16, 2018

### Illinois Opts In to FirstNet

Dear Illinois Public Safety Practitioner,

As we've seen in large-scale emergencies, such as a mass shooting and other major incidents, emergency responders' ability to use cell phones and cellular data service can be crippled by network congestion. It's imperative that public safety agencies can effectively communicate, access critical information, and transmit video for situational awareness and response coordination. For these first responders to conduct their mission, they need this equipment, yet most important is access to information, information that will direct them to the scene, inform them of the dangers, provide reference for solutions as well as provide overall command and control of the situation.

On Dec. 18, 2017, Governor Bruce Rauner signed the Opt-In letter with FirstNet. As a result, public safety professionals want to know what their agency's obligations are regarding the FirstNet public safety broadband cellular service. There is no law, rule, obligation or requirement to sign up or use FirstNet service. Opt-In simply means that FirstNet will provide service here in Illinois. It is the individual agency's decision as to what network provider they choose to use.

Considerations for your agency:

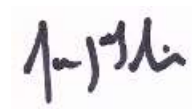
- FirstNet's mission is to provide nationwide coverage and a network that gives public safety priority over all other users on the network.
- Make sure your agency will receive the required level of coverage in the areas you operate. Hint: Ask the carriers to see their "In-Building" coverage maps. In-Building coverage is a more accurate representation of actual coverage public safety users will normally experience with devices inside vehicles.
- Different carriers might offer different features to public safety users, which can have an impact on the user experience. Choose the ones that best benefit your agency.

- If an agency decides to explore how public safety broadband cellular could benefit their agency, they need to test the service in their area. We encourage agencies to request demonstration devices from the carrier(s) and thoroughly test the service, the coverage, and anything else that would affect their decision to choose one particular carrier over another.
- Neither FirstNet nor any other carrier based push-to-talk (PTT) services are a viable replacement for the mission critical land mobile radio systems (LMR) two-way radios used by public safety today. Although there are some applications for cellular PTT, they are not public safety grade. Most experts in this area believe we are at least a decade away from being able to fully transition from LMR to cellular-based PTT networks.

Public safety agencies in Illinois are in a strong position in this situation, as there are many carriers competing for their public safety business. In today's competitive environment, negotiate hard to get the best possible cost for your agency.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss FirstNet further please reach out to me. In addition, there is a website established for FirstNet that has lots of helpful information please visit [www.firstnet.com](http://www.firstnet.com).

Regards,



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