

FirstNet: Transforming Communications for First Responders in New York

March 2025



FirstNet in New York

[FirstNet®](#), [Built with AT&T](#) adoption, is strong across all public safety disciplines in New York. First responders serving both large cities and small, rural communities rely on FirstNet. Since the State of New York [opted into FirstNet](#) in December 2017, **there are hundreds of thousands of FirstNet users** in more than **520 cities** across the state.



FirstNet Buildout in New York

FirstNet has expanded rural coverage and boosted network capacity for public safety in both large cities and small towns. The First Responder Network Authority's (FirstNet Authority) licensed **Band 14 spectrum** has been added to over **2,900 tower sites** across New York. During the initial phase of FirstNet buildout, **dozens of new, purpose-built**

FirstNet sites launched across the state – in locations identified by public safety as coverage priorities. During the development of the custom FirstNet State Plan for New York, the State of New York identified coverage in the Catskills, Southern Tier and the Finger Lakes as a top priority. The following **36 counties** received new FirstNet cell sites: Albany, Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chemung, Chenango, Clinton, Columbia, Cortland, Delaware, Dutchess, Erie, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Niagara, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, Otsego, Saratoga, Schoharie, Schuyler, Seneca, St. Lawrence, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Ulster, Washington and Wyoming counties.



Next Phase of Buildout and Reinvestment

The FirstNet network is 100% self-funded and receives no taxpayer funding. The enacting statute requires FirstNet to continuously evolve and grow to meet public safety's needs. In February 2024, the FirstNet Authority announced its [next major phase](#) of FirstNet evolution – with an \$8+ billion investment over 10 years, including \$2 billion for [additional coverage](#) enhancements.

Examples of FirstNet users include:

- [New York Police Department \(NYPD\)](#)
- [New York Fire Department \(FDNY\)](#)
- [New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority Police Department](#)
- [Troy Police Department](#)
- [Oneida County Sheriff](#)
- [Bangs Ambulance in Ithaca, NY](#)
- [City of Rome, including the city's public works, police, emergency services, and fire departments](#)

As part of this investment, AT&T committed to launch 1,000 new Band 14 cell sites between 2024 and 2025. In October 2024, AT&T announced it crossed the halfway point in meeting this commitment. As a result, FirstNet Band 14 tower sites are now available to public safety on FirstNet when they need it in the following **New York counties**: Albany, Erie, Essex, Jefferson, Montgomery, Onondaga, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schuyler, Suffolk, Ulster and Washington.



FirstNet in Action in New York

To learn more about FirstNet in New York, the FirstNet Authority has a state-specific resource on its website where you can find user testimonials and use cases highlighting innovative FirstNet innovation and emergency responses. Check it out here: [New York | First Responder Network Authority](#)



FirstNet Response Operations Group™ and the FirstNet Fleet

Exclusively through the FirstNet program, public safety has access to a dedicated fleet of 180+ deployable network assets. Available 24/7 and at no cost to public safety, these assets provide additional connectivity when and where they need it – both during planned events and times of emergency. Deployment of the FirstNet fleet is guided by the FirstNet Response Operations Group (ROG) – led by a team of former first responders – based on the needs of public safety and in alignment with Homeland Security’s National Incident Management System.

FirstNet ROG in New York

Since 2020, Public safety agencies in New York have made **more than 150 requests** for emergency and planned event support, and FirstNet ROG has deployed mobile cell sites and other solutions dedicated solely for first responder communications.

The FirstNet fleet provides similar capabilities and connectivity as a cell tower, and includes ground-based and aerial assets, such as Satellite Cell on Light Trucks (SatCOLTs) and Flying COWs™ (Cell on Wings). These portable network assets link to FirstNet via satellite and do not rely on commercial power availability. Additionally, public safety agencies can own and operate their own portable FirstNet cell towers, including the FirstNet Compact Rapid Deployable (CRD) and miniCRDs. These assets

can be set up in minutes by just one person, giving first responders greater command and control of their own network. *See photos below.*

National Program Overview: FirstNet Today

- **America's Public Safety Broadband Network.** Following a 9/11 Commission recommendation, the U.S. Congress created the FirstNet Authority in 2012 and set aside a band of spectrum (Band 14) to address public safety's communications needs. Today, more first responders rely on FirstNet than any other wireless network, with about 29,500 public safety agencies and direct-support organizations subscribed. On FirstNet, public safety has always-on, multi-tier priority, preemption, and dedicated FirstNet Band 14 spectrum. FirstNet equips public safety with purpose-built technology to address public safety's unique needs and requirements.
- **Expanding Wireless Coverage Where Public Safety Needs It.** The initial phase of FirstNet buildout was [completed in March 2023](#). As a result, more than 1,000 new, purpose-built FirstNet cell sites launched across the country in public safety priority locations. Additionally, the FirstNet Authority's licensed Band 14 spectrum was added to tens of thousands of existing tower sites, and collaboration with small and rural providers further extended the reach of FirstNet coverage. Congress made rural coverage a top priority in the bipartisan FirstNet enacting law in 2012. Today, FirstNet has the largest coverage footprint of any other wireless network – outpacing commercial wireless networks by 250K+ square miles (as a point of reference: the State of Texas is approx. 260K sq. mi.).
- **FirstNet Governance & Public-Private Partnership.** FirstNet is a fully cost-sustainable program and receives no taxpayer funding. The FirstNet network is overseen by the FirstNet Authority, an independent authority within the U.S. Department of Commerce. Public safety plays a direct role in oversight and directing the network's evolution, through the FirstNet Board of Directors and Public Safety Advisory Committee. Following an open, competitive process in 2017, the federal government selected AT&T as the private sector partner. FirstNet is built and maintained through this successful public-private partnership.

FirstNet Support for Public Safety Emergency Response & Planned Events in New York



In December 2024, a FirstNet Compact Rapid Deployable was deployed to support local, state, and federal public safety in Times Square for New Year's Eve celebrations.



In April 2023, a FirstNet SatCOLT was deployed to augment connectivity for public safety responding to a wildfire in a remote area near Washingtonville.



In October 2023, a FirstNet SatCOLT was deployed to support a search and rescue team in Gansevoort.



In May 2024, a FirstNet SatCOLT was deployed to provide first responders with dedicated connectivity for US Navy Fleet Week at the Homeport Pier on Staten Island.