



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council members commend New Mexico's undertaking of the FirstNet emergency first responder network

WINDOW ROCK – Members of the Navajo Nation Council commend New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez's recent announcement that the state of New Mexico has partnered with AT&T to begin implementing a high-tech enhancement to the first responder communication network throughout the state through the First Responder Network Authority, also known as FirstNet.

FirstNet was established in 2012 by Congress, which is designed to deliver a nationwide broadband network dedicated to public safety, to strengthen public safety users' communications capabilities enabling them to respond more quickly and effectively to accidents, disasters, and emergencies.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), who is a member of the Law and Order Committee, has been a strong advocate for the implementation of FirstNet to help first responders on the Navajo Nation who often encounter difficulties with communication during emergency situations.

"It's very encouraging to see New Mexico become the first state in our region to adopt the FirstNet system and I thank Gov. Martinez for opting into the program," stated Delegate Begay. "I will continue my advocacy efforts to ensure the system benefits the Navajo Nation."

Delegate Begay added that he continues to encourage chapters to pass resolutions supporting FirstNet and that he expects the Council to pass one also. He asked that the governors from the states of Arizona and Utah also opt-in to the FirstNet program.

A board composed of individuals from the public safety community, federal, state, and local governments, as well as technology, finance, and wireless sectors leads FirstNet. The program has approximately 200 employees with expertise in public safety, telecommunications, customer service, technology, procurement, and other areas needed to develop the network.

According to a press release from the Office of the Governor, most law enforcement agencies currently operate on separate data communication networks, which can lead to confusion when officers or other first responders travel throughout different parts of the state.

In addition, the initiative will help unify the emergency communication network across New Mexico to ensure that more first responders at the local, state and federal level have the resources they need in any emergency situation.

Furthermore, it states that FirstNet will provide the following:

- Connect first responder partners to the critical information they need in a highly secure manner when handling day-to-day operations responding to any emergencies;
- Support large events, like the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta;
- Create an efficient data communication experience for public safety personnel in agencies and jurisdictions across the State during natural disasters;
- Enhance network coverage in rural areas, helping first responders and the 690,000+ rural residents they serve in New Mexico;
- Provide access to a dedicated network of deployable technology for additional coverage and support when needed;
- Drive infrastructure investments;
- Usher in a new wave of innovation that first responders can depend on;
- Create an ever-evolving set of life-saving tools for public safety, including public safety apps, specialized devices and Internet of Things technologies;
- And carries the potential for future integration with NextGen 9-1-1 networks and Smart Cities' infrastructure.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'í'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz't'í) has also pushed for the implementation of FirstNet on the Navajo Nation to provide a vital component to establish an AMBER Alert system that can serve the entire Nation.

Delegate Begay said he will continue working with the states of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico to fully implement FirstNet so that first responders on the Navajo Nation will benefit from the program.

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