First Net
August 7, 2015

The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) was established with the ultimate goal of creating a nationwide, secure, public safety broadband network. As something of a first step, the legislation that established FirstNet expanded the public safety allocation of the radio frequency bands from 10 to 20 MHz. This should ensure that first responders have access to telecommunications, particularly during mass disasters when commercial broadband can become congested causing rescue, medical, and law enforcement efforts to be less than effective.

What's in it for prosecutors?

For those prosecutors and deputies who routinely assist law enforcement at crime scenes either remotely or at the scene, FirstNet will offer little advantage over commercial service. Obviously, the same would be true for those who work alongside or remotely on warrants.

It is estimated, however, that FirstNet's broadband network will be operable within the next five to seven years. In the interim, it is expected that applications will be developed to assist first responders with crime and fire scene management, command and control, and the like. It will thus be possible that data, other than voice, will flow through the FirstNet broadband network. Some of these applications and some of this data may be of relevance to prosecutors. Additionally, it is possible that prosecutors will develop applications relevant to their work or that will draw from first responder applications and that will be best accessed through a secure, clear link.

Indiana's Integrated Public Safety Council (IPSC) is the lead agency for FirstNet in Indiana. More information is available on their website: http://www.in.gov/ipsc/2769.htm. Information from FirstNet is available at http://firstnet.gov/.

Those with an interest in public safety apps may wish to consult the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officers website and by navigating through the AppComm portion of their site: https://www.apcointl.org/.