

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Natchitoches Parish 9-1-1 and the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Initiative...**

**Natchitoches, LA., May 14, 2015** — What many believe to be the most significant advancement for police, fire, and emergency medical services communications in recent history is quickly gaining momentum. First conceived following the attacks of 9/11 and prompted by the need to provide better interoperable communications between multiple public safety responders, the nations Public Safety Broadband initiative, **FirstNet**, was born. **FirstNet** was created by federal law with the duty to build, operate and maintain the first high-speed, nationwide wireless broadband network dedicated for use by public safety entities. Although **FirstNet** is a nationwide broadband network initiative providing services much like the services provided today by Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T or any other communications service provider who offers data plans, **FirstNet** is not a private company. It is an independent authority within the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). **FirstNet** is governed by a 15-member Board of high level government officials who receive input and guidance from a 12-member board appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. This board is made up of individuals representing public safety; local, state and federal government, and the wireless industry. An exciting fact in its development is that the **FirstNet** network design elements will adhere to rigid standards that exclusively support public safety, and it will be interoperable.

On the local front, Louisiana **FirstNet** officials conducted a **FirstNet** broadband outreach meeting in Natchitoches on April 27, 2015 . The purpose of this meeting was to introduce local public safety officials to the benefits of the broadband network. On

May 4-5, 2015, the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) held its 2015 Broadband Summit in Washington DC. With over 270 attendees, representing 36 states and the District of Columbia, APCO's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting was kicked off with an address by T.J. Kennedy, Acting Executive Director of **FirstNet**. Mr. Kennedy gave attendees an update on the progress being made toward implementing the nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband network. On May 14, 2015, FirstNet hosted its first Louisiana **FirstNet** Consultation Meeting in Baton Rouge, La. at which time federal **FirstNet** officials joined other public safety representatives from around the state for a full day of planning and strategy discussions.

Total build out of the network will take years to complete. Natchitoches Parish 9-1-1 is proud to be a public safety stakeholder in this initiative and has been an active participant in each of the three recent stakeholder meetings. Willis Carter, 9-1-1 Director for Natchitoches Parish echoes what many public safety practitioners agree upon and that is; *"FirstNet may very well be the single most important public safety initiative that many of us will see in our lifetimes."* Anyone interested in learning more about the **FirstNet** broadband initiative can go to [www.firstnet.gov](http://www.firstnet.gov) , or [www.firstnet.louisiana.gov](http://www.firstnet.louisiana.gov).

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**About the Natchitoches Parish Communications District (Natchitoches 9-1-1)** *Natchitoches Parish 9-1-1 is committed to providing fast, efficient and effective access to emergency public safety services for all the citizens and visitors to Natchitoches Parish. Since 1988 the "District" has served in a pivotal role ensuring the safety of residents and visitors to Natchitoches Parish by providing the support services, which connects the citizens experiencing emergencies with emergency services via the use of one, easy to remember and simple to use 3-digit number, 9-1-1. The Natchitoches Parish 9-1-1 District provides the equipment and systems necessary to receive 9-1-1 calls from the nearly 40,000 residents of the parish, as well as the ever-increasing numbers of visitors to the area. We are proud to serve as "Natchitoches Parish's Gateway to Public Safety Services".*

Find out more at [www.natchitoches911.org](http://www.natchitoches911.org).