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Emergency Communication Networks

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To: All Minnesota Public Safety Entities
Date: March 24, 2020
Subject: Cellular Communications for Emergency Responders

Emergency communications are a critical component of a comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our wireless devices must have reliable network connectivity for us to efficiently carry out our public safety mission. These are unprecedented times and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety division of Emergency Communication Networks (DPS-ECN) remains in regular contact with the wireless carriers to help ensure that Minnesota public safety/public service users have the resources necessary to support their response efforts.

Cellular telephones and hotspot devices connect to cellular telephone networks to provide voice calling and internet connectivity. As the COVID-19 pandemic has grown, so has the demand on the nation's commercial cellular network bandwidth. As more individuals are teleworking and students are home from school, call congestion has become an issue. The tower sites are functioning properly and the connectivity issues are related to the capacity of the network.

The current network infrastructure cannot meet the rapid onset of demands being placed on it by exponential increase in user access. This demand has, in certain locations and at various times, reduced or compromised public safety's ability to communicate on these networks. These concerns have been shared with commercial cellular networks by local, state, and federal authorities.

You have a few options to help you mitigate any degradation of service that you may experience on your cellular networks:

- FirstNet cellular customers should, as needed, contact their "Local Control" administrator to uplift their service.
- Non-FirstNet cellular customers should contact their local administrator or their cellular provider to share the specifics of their issues.
- ECN maintains strong relationships with representatives from a number of partners in the public safety communications industry. Vendor specific comments, questions, or concerns regarding the products, services, and support available to public safety agencies can be directed to:

FirstNet Built with AT&T

	<p>Metro / State Agencies (Green Area) Shane Olsen so273v@att.com Mobile: 612-417-8915</p>
	<p>Southern/Western/Northwestern Minnesota (Blue Area) Kyle Senne ks306m@att.com Mobile: 612-961-7675</p>
	<p>Northeast/East Central Minnesota (Red Area) Rus Poser rp8081@att.com Mobile: 612-391-5045</p>
	<p>FirstNet Customer Support 24/7/365 Support 1-800-574-7000</p>

Verizon Wireless:

<p>Erik Perschmann Client Partner Government erik.perschmann@verizonwireless.com Mobile: 612-360-3660</p>	<p>Verizon Response Team 24/7/365 Support 1-800-981-9558</p>
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Federal Options

There are also a number of resources available through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security-Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (DHS-CISA). The Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) and Wireless Priority Service (WPS) programs provide priority access for public safety users to telephone networks. These services can help alleviate call congestion issues for key personnel involved in the COVID-19 response efforts. FirstNet users may also be provisioned as it will extend priority service outside FirstNet to non-subscribers. You may also want to consider access for business continuity purposes for key individuals.

- Determine if your agency has access to [Government Emergency Telecommunications Service \(GETS\)](#) or [Wireless Priority Service \(WPS\)](#) programs providing priority access for public safety to telephone networks ([WPS account search](#)). If not, [make application](#) for these services. Consult the US Department of Homeland Security's [GETS/WPS Documents webpage](#) for additional information.
- WPS can be activated at no cost for public safety and public service users.

- The PTS Dialer App (available for both iOS and Android) integrates GETS/WPS to your contacts and makes usage extremely simple.
- WPS is based on the next available connection path and is not a preemptive service. Users may experience a delay as their call is processed. During the delay, users should not hang up and call again as that places them at the bottom of the priority queue.
- In addition, the DHS-CISA Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) program can assist in expediting installing service or expanding bandwidth at fixed site locations.
- Additional information on these programs is available at <https://www.cisa.gov/government-emergency-telecommunications-service-gets>

Outreach to the public

Approximately 80 percent of 911 calls in Minnesota are made from a wireless device. ECN is partnering with the COVID-19 Joint Information Center (JIC) to remind citizens of the impact that increased wireless usage may have on the ability of their friends, family, and neighbors to reach 911 in an emergency. It also reduces the capabilities of public safety agencies to communicate with each other during an emergency response. If every Minnesotan is considerate in limiting the amount of time they spend surfing or streaming on their wireless devices, we can help ensure that those who need network access to report and/or respond to an emergency are able to do so. Remember, we are ONE Minnesota. Together we can make a difference.