

Newsletter

June 2021

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Volume 5, Edition 6



Communications critical in terrorism exercise

The San Francisco Bay Area ranks fifth nationally for a terrorist attack risk by the Department of Homeland Security. See how local and state public safety and government agencies from Northern California use the FirstNet platform during a planned radiological terrorism exercise to ensure they're ready for this kind of threat. [WATCH VIDEO](#).

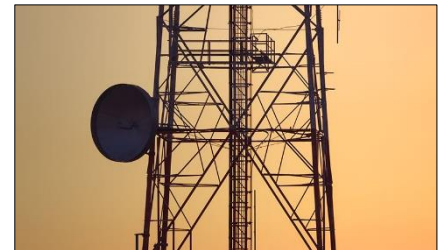
Man's 'best friend' comes to FirstNet

By AT&T

To support public safety on the front lines, [FirstNet®, Built with AT&T*](#) is introducing "[ROG the Dog](#)" animal assisted therapy. This new initiative builds off of the launch of the [FirstNet Health & Wellness Coalition](#) and reinforces our commitment to *Be There* for America's first responders by further supporting the health and well-being of those who serve their communities each and every day.

"Nothing is more important than the lives of first responders and the people they serve," says Jason Porter, President, Public Sector and the FirstNet Program at AT&T. "That's why we're bringing ROG the Dog to the front lines for the men and

(Continued on Page 4)



FirstNet cell sites launching across U.S. to support public safety

FirstNet gives first responders – and those critical to their mission – a purpose-built experience they can't get anywhere else. That includes dedicated coverage and capacity, when and where they need it.

[FirstNet](#) already covers over 99% of the U.S. population today. But to better serve public safety, we're continuing to extend the nationwide reach of FirstNet by rolling out high-quality spectrum, known as Band 14. The FirstNet Authority – an independent government agency – granted AT&T the right to use Band 14 specifically to support public safety on FirstNet. This gives agencies large and small the reliable, unthrottled connectivity and modern communications tools they need.

In areas where coverage already exists, Band 14 helps first responders get the capacity they

(Continued on Page 6)

FIRSTNET HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Three secrets about post-traumatic stress

By Dr. Anna Fitch Courie

Director, Responder Wellness,
FirstNet Program at AT&T

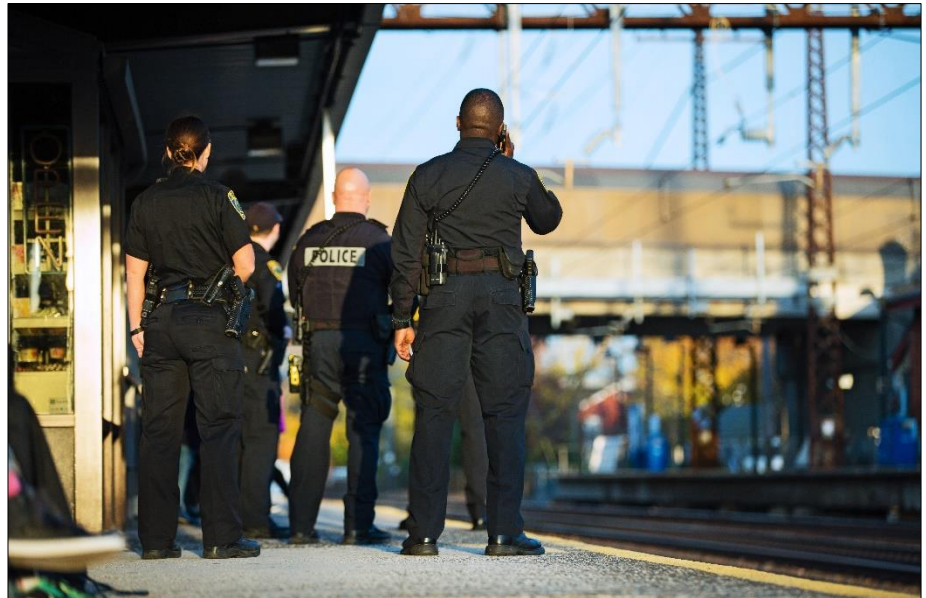
Post-traumatic stress is common in first responders. In fact, first responders experience PTS at statistically significant higher rates than the general population.¹ Post-traumatic stress is something that, left unattended, can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. Unfortunately, post-traumatic stress disorder is also positively correlated with suicide.² This month, we unpack some secrets about post-traumatic stress, as we mark Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Month.

Secret 1: Post traumatic stress is not the same as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Stress is a normal response. In fact, the stress response can be a protective factor in the face of life-threatening events. When you, as a first responder, run towards the fire, the bullets, the fight, the distress, the damaged, and the grieving, that's going to create stress. Period. That would happen to anyone. Post-traumatic stress disorder occurs when individuals begin exhibiting negative behavior patterns because of multiple factors. Often, individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder have experienced traumatic events prior to becoming a first responder.

The individual with post-traumatic stress disorder can exhibit irritability, poor sleep, guarding behaviors, unreasonable anger, flashbacks and disrupted thought patterns. These symptoms can lead to poor coping behaviors, such as increased alcohol and drug abuse, isolation, aggression, loss of work productivity, and poor decision making. Post-traumatic stress disorder results when the traumatic events are buried and not addressed as a normal part of the experience of being a first responder.

Your goals should include being aware of the stress you deal with as a part of



Post-traumatic stress is common in first responders. In fact, first responders experience PTS at statistically significant higher rates than the general population¹.

your job and developing positive coping mechanisms in which to address them. Dr. Sara Metz of [Code 4 Counseling](#), says, “the first step is being willing to show up for yourself with curiosity and compassion.

“When folks show up in my office for the first time with trauma stress injuries nine times out of ten the deepest wound that needs to be addressed is caused by the inner critic – the shame that responders experience can be intense,” she says. “Responders can absolutely thrive when they:

1. Develop a true understanding of their injuries;
2. Show up for themselves with the same compassion they offer others.

Easier said than done, but I've seen it happen enough times to know that with the right supports in place, these responders can absolutely heal.”

Secret 2: You can grow from post-traumatic stress.

Just because you experience a terrible event doesn't mean you are

broken for life. Will you carry the scars of having to experience events that many of us cannot even comprehend? Likely. But there is an opportunity for growth. That's the magic of the resiliency movement. All the chatter about mindfulness, gratitude, self-reflection, journaling, tactical breathing and other habits are driving you to reflect on the events you experience.

And that's encouraging you to seek ways of reconnecting with the things that bring you joy, meaning, and hope in your life. The threads of joy, meaning, and hope provide the foundation to support you when the next thing happens and you aren't sure how you'll pull yourself out of it.

Ken Falke, Chairman, Boulder Crest Retreat, and Josh Goldberg, executive director of the [Boulder Crest Foundation](#), are leading an effort to facilitate post-traumatic growth in the first responder population. In “Struggle Well,” Falke and Goldberg provide a roadmap for transforming struggle into strength

(Continued on Page 3)

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(Continued from Page 2)

and post-traumatic growth so that first responders can find meaning in their struggle. Post-traumatic growth speaks to the ways in which trauma can catalyze growth in five areas: new possibilities, deeper relationships, personal strength, appreciation for life, and spiritual and existential change.

“No one deserves a great life more than our first responders, who sacrifice so much in their service,” Goldberg says. “A key part of that is ensuring they can do more than just survive the lifestyle – and learn to thrive and grow during stress and struggle. Our programs and work are designed to ensure that first responders can do precisely that – and we see no community better poised to grow through trauma than they are.”

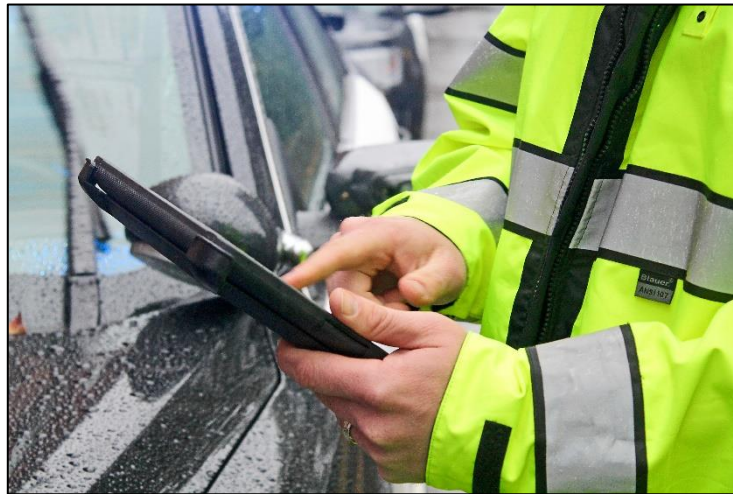
Secret 3: You are a hero, but you are human.

Everyone is talking about reducing the stigma surrounding post-traumatic stress, but the secret starts with you. When we repeat behaviors that put diagnosis in a corner and shroud them in mystery and suspicion, we perpetuate that stigma.

Stigma happens when we whisper about the problems we face, instead of admitting them, or put on a face of false bravado. Stigma happens when we know there's a problem, but we consistently avoid addressing the issue.

We know you are a hero. We want to celebrate that and support that, because the world needs first responders.

First responders are a unique and wonderful breed of individuals that are the heartbeat of our communities being vital and thriving places for people to come together and live. We also need to recognize that you are human; and it is critical you take the time to take care of you and to recognize that human beings need connection. Every time you acknowledge, “hey, that was hard,” “hey



Post-traumatic growth speaks to the ways in which trauma can catalyze growth in five areas: new possibilities, deeper relationships, personal strength, appreciation for life, and spiritual and existential change.

that hit me harder than I realized,” or “hey, I haven’t been coping from that event well,” you are busting down the stigma doors. You’re serving as a beacon for others that it’s okay to *not* be okay and that they are not alone in the dark.

Because peers watch each other, listen to each other, and grow from each other, acknowledging suffering out loud is an essential part of trauma healing and growth. If we share our experiences and struggles, then we help someone else who’s also struggling, and we offer them the healing power of hope.

Dr. Anna Fitch Courie, Director of Responder Wellness, FirstNet Program at AT&T is a nurse, Army wife, former university faculty, and author. Dr. Courie has worked for over 20 years in the health care profession including Bone Marrow Transplant, Intensive Care, Public Health, and Health Promotion practice.

Dr. Courie holds a Bachelor’s in Nursing from Clemson University; a Master’s in Nursing Education from the University of Wyoming; and a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Ohio State University. Dr. Courie’s area of expertise is integration of public

health strategy across disparate organizations to achieve health improvement goals.

Dr. Sara Metz received her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Denver Graduate School of Professional Psychology and is a licensed psychologist in the state of Colorado. For the past 12 years, Dr. Metz has specialized in public safety psychology and has provided psychological support services to emergency responders (police, fire, EMS, dispatch, healthcare workers, etc.) and their families.

Josh Goldberg is the Executive Director of the Boulder Crest Foundation that provides post traumatic growth programs and training for first responders and veterans nationwide. Josh is responsible for leading the development and delivery of training, technology, research and evaluation, and social and policy changes solutions based on the science of Posttraumatic Growth.

¹Heyman, M., Dill, J.; & Douglas, R. (2018). The Ruderman White Paper on Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders. Ruderman Family Foundation.

²Police Executive Research Forum. 2019. An Occupational Risk: What every police agency should do to prevent suicide among its officers.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND COMES TO FIRSTNET

Therapy dog initiative to further health and wellness for America's first responders

(Continued from Page 1)

women who run *toward* emergencies. We understand the service these everyday heroes provide to our communities does not come without burden and personal sacrifice. Serving public safety is our mission, and it's an honor to grow FirstNet beyond delivering innovative new technologies and mission-centric features, but also helping ensure that those who put their lives on the line are at their best day in and day out."

Why is this important?

Compared to the general population, first responders experience higher rates of depression, PTSD, burnout, anxiety and other mental health issues.¹ In law enforcement, one study found a more than 20 year difference in life expectancy compared to the average American male.² In addition, it's estimated 20-25% of all first responders experience post-traumatic stress.³

Therapy dogs are proven to have a positive impact on mental and physical health.

Studies have shown that interacting with animals can improve coping and recovery, enhance morale, decrease stress, and reduce the effects of PTSD and emotional distress.⁴

And as public safety's partner, we have a responsibility unlike any other wireless carrier to deliver for the first responder community. That's why we've gone beyond our commitment to build and operate FirstNet and are providing this unique type of support to keep them mission ready.

What is ROG the Dog?

Affectionately named after the [FirstNet Response Operations Group](#) (ROG) – the team led by former first responders that guides the deployment of the FirstNet fleet of dedicated deployable network assets – ROG the Dog is actually a fleet of trained Labradoodles who specialize in



animal assisted therapy for first responders.

We're collaborating with [Global Medical Response](#) (GMR) to provide the therapy dog services, which are especially meant for times of crises following natural or man-made disasters.

GMR chose Labradoodles as their therapy dog breed because of their temperament, they are hypoallergenic, and well-suited to providing calm and care in the middle of chaos. The ROG the Dog initiative currently comprises **over 30 animals** located across the U.S.

"Emergency response work has always been challenging, demanding so much from those sworn to protect our communities," says Rhonda Kelly, National Director, Health, Wellness and Resilience, GMR Life Executive Director, All Clear Foundation. "Recent years have increased those challenges and stressors, in many cases significantly increasing the mental, emotional and physical tolls on responders. We are proud to partner with FirstNet to provide additional supports during the times when responders need them most, giving back to those who give so much for us."

FirstNet Response Operations Program

To strengthen public safety's command and control of their network, we launched the FirstNet Response Operations Program in 2018. This program aligns with Homeland Security's [National Incident Management System](#) with a focus on life safety, incident stabilization and property conservation. With FirstNet, public safety agencies have access to a dedicated, nationwide fleet of **80+** land-based and airborne portable cell sites, like [FirstNet One](#) – all at no additional charge.

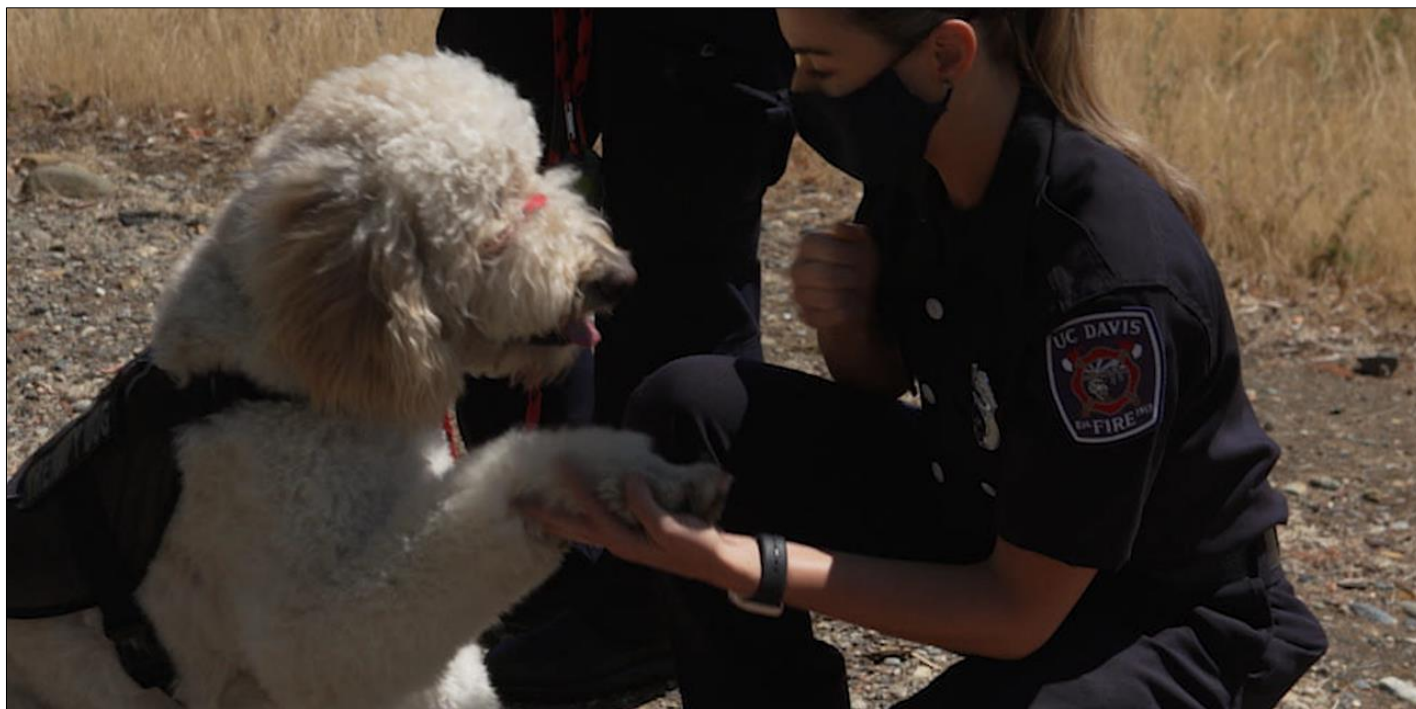
The deployable network assets are designed to keep FirstNet subscribers connected to the information they need, no matter where their mission takes them. This allows first responders to make rescues, communicate and coordinate their emergency response, or aid in recovery, even in the hardest hit areas or most remote parts of the country.

When public safety calls upon the FirstNet fleet for additional support, the FirstNet ROG team works with the agency to assess the situation and either deploy an asset, or identify and

(Continued on Page 5)

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(Continued from Page 4)

provide alternate solutions that could better serve public safety – such as expediting network restoration, quickly turning-up indoor coverage, and now, providing therapy dog services following a crisis.

So far this year, public safety has requested support **more than 125 times** for planned and emergency events covering everything from [COVID-19 vaccination centers](#) to winter storms.

How can public safety request ROG the Dog?

Agencies on FirstNet can request ROG the Dog in the same way they request an asset from the FirstNet fleet. And just like the fleet, ROG the Dog is available at no additional charge. Simply, call 1-800-574-7000 or contact their FirstNet Solutions Consultant and the Response Operations Group team will work with you to determine if your request meets the requirements for therapy dog services.

What is FirstNet?

FirstNet is the only nationwide, high-speed broadband communications platform dedicated to and purpose-built for America's first responders and the extended public safety community.

Shaped by the vision of the first responder community and Congress following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, FirstNet stands above commercial offerings.

It is built with AT&T in public-private partnership with the [First Responder Network Authority](#) (FirstNet Authority) – an independent agency within the federal government.

With more than 16,000 public safety agencies and organizations now on FirstNet – accounting for more than **2.2 million connections** nationwide⁵ – the FirstNet network is providing first responders with truly dedicated coverage and capacity when they need it, unique benefits

like *always-on* priority and preemption, and high-quality Band 14 spectrum.

These advanced capabilities help fire, EMS, law enforcement and more save lives and protect their communities.

¹Purvis, M., Fullencamp, L. & Docherty, M. (2020). Animal Assisted Therapy on Law Enforcement Mental Health: A Therapy Dog Implementation Guide. Bowling Green University.

²<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4734369/>

³<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>

⁴Tedeschi, P. and Jenkins, M. (2019). Transforming Trauma: Resilience and Healing through our connections with animals. Purdue University Press.

⁵As of April 2021.

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EXPANDING COVERAGE

FirstNet cell sites launching across U.S. to support public safety

(Continued from Page 1)

need to get the job done. We're also launching new FirstNet cell sites across the country to expand rural and remote coverage. So far, we've deployed Band 14 on existing cell sites in more than 700 markets nationwide. This includes areas where connectivity has created a challenge for emergency responses. Areas benefiting from a new, purpose-built FirstNet cell site include:

- [Alabama](#)
- [Arkansas](#)
- [Arizona](#)
- Connecticut
 - [Easton](#)
- [Delaware](#)
 - [Townsend](#)
- [Florida](#)
- [Georgia](#)
- Idaho
 - [Garden Valley](#)
 - [Kamiah](#)
 - [McCall](#)
- [Illinois](#)
- [Indiana](#)
 - [Indiana Update](#)
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
 - [East Carroll Parish](#)
- [Maine](#)
 - [Millinocket](#)
 - [Penobscot County](#)
- [Maryland](#)
 - [Baltimore County](#)
 - [Cecil County](#)
 - [Maryland Update](#)
 - [Tilghman Island](#)
 - [Waldorf](#)
- Massachusetts
 - [Monterey](#)
 - [Western Massachusetts](#)
- [Michigan](#)
- [Minnesota](#)
 - [Lewiston](#)
 - [Northeastern Minnesota](#)
 - [Northern Minnesota](#)
 - [Northwestern Minnesota](#)
- [Mississippi](#)



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- [Missouri](#)
 - [Wright County](#)
- Montana
 - [Columbus](#)
 - [Hysham](#)
 - [Fort Benton](#)
- [New Hampshire](#)
 - [Antrim](#)
 - [Conway](#)
 - [Danbury](#)
 - [New Hampshire Update](#)
- [New Jersey](#)
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 - [Oswego County](#)
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- Wyoming
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 - [Owl Creek](#)