Georgia Conference Reports

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FirstNet & Georgia FirstNet Conference, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, Forsyth, Ga. (5/9/17)

Attendance: 115
Presenters:
Chuck Murph- FirstNet Region 4 Lead
Tim Fellows-AT&T Sales
Cliff Barnett-AT&T Engineer
Southern Linc
Warren Shepard- Georgia FirstNet Coordinator (UCF Masters Graduate 05)

The conference provided attendees with an excellent overview of FirstNet, it's mission, partnership with AT&T and the associated timelines. Southern Linc presented about their network in Georgia and Alabama but did not get much traction with the audience.

A good discussion on the Internet of things was presented and well received.

Warren Shepard did an outstanding job explaining all the impacts surrounding the governor's decision.

Excellent audience participation and questions. Some interest and discussion regarding NextGen 911 and using FirstNet to send text, photos and video directly to officers in the field. Cost is important to attendees but coverage was too. They were informed that costs will be revealed in the state plan document scheduled for release in mid-June.

The AT&T new coverage map for Georgia did most of talking. The attendees were also impressed by the support AT&T brings to the network and the plans for investing in the network. The AT&T engineer did a nice job of showing the growth of data transmissions over the last 10 years and how important a major partner like AT&T is to keep pace with the technology enhancements.

In private conversations with some attendees, they are solid behind Georgia opting in. They have serious doubts that the state has the technical expertise or desire to build their own network.

Georgia Emergency Management Summit & Training Sessions, Savannah, GA (April 18-21, 2017)

GENERAL NOTES:

- Diverse groups/sectors including public safety, emergency management and public health. Attendees from throughout Georgia with quite a few from other FEMA Region IV states.
- Knowledge of FirstNet, and perceptions of its value, varied significantly by group:
    - Public safety had little working knowledge or understanding of FirstNet or its current status. Perceptions included the need for better interoperability that FirstNet will bring, but concerns on costs to end user agencies.
        - Rural providers expressed belief of poor AT&T coverage in their counties.
    - Public Health had very little knowledge of FirstNet – even a failure for much name recognition.
        - Overall perception that their existing communication systems, mostly done virtually through websites with radio as backup, serves current needs well.
    - Emergency management had similar knowledge and perceptions as public safety. Less concerns mentioned regarding end user costs.
- Very well done presentation on FirstNet was done by the FirstNet Region IV staff and a representative from Georgia Emergency Management. Georgia's EM Director (and SPOC) was in the audience. Good dialog and many attendee's questions were answered.

ISSUES / QUESTIONS IDENITFIED:

- Perceptions of poor coverage (currently) with AT&T versus other carriers. Mostly voiced by rural counties that already feel marginalized.