

# NIST to expand work on emergency communications to support FirstNet

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The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will significantly expand its work in support of an advanced wireless communications system for the nation's first responders and emergency workers as a result of new legislation.

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-96), signed into law by President Obama on February 22, creates a new "First Responder Network Authority" (FirstNet) within the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to build a [broadband network](#) for police, firefighters, [emergency medical service](#) professionals and other public safety officials. The program will be financed from the proceeds of a special auction of radio-frequency [broadcast spectrum](#) rights by the [Federal Communications Commission](#).

FirstNet is intended to provide a nationwide broadband network for emergency [first responders](#) based on a set of common standards to ensure interoperability across public safety and police agencies at state, local, and federal levels. As part of this effort, NIST will work with NTIA, FirstNet, private industry and the public safety organizations to conduct research and develop new standards, technologies and applications to advance public safety communications.

Core components of this program will include documenting public safety requirements and driving the adoption of those requirements into the appropriate standards; developing the capability for communications

between currently deployed public safety narrow band systems and the future nationwide broadband network; and establishing a roadmap that seeks to capture and address public safety's needs beyond what can be provided by the current generation of broadband technology and driving technological progress in that direction. NIST intends to use a combination of in-house research, competitive grants and transfers to other federal agencies to accomplish these objectives.

The act allocates up to \$300 million to NIST, dependent on the funds received from future spectrum auctions, to be spent through 2022.

**More information:** For more on NIST's work on emergency communications, visit [www.nist.gov/oles/public\\_safety.cfm](http://www.nist.gov/oles/public_safety.cfm)

Provided by National Institute of Standards and Technology

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