



‘Man’s Best Friend’ Comes to FirstNet: AT&T Launches Animal Assisted Therapy Initiative to Further Health & Wellness for America’s First Responders

30+ “ROG the Dog” Therapy Animals Stationed Nationwide to Deploy Following Emergencies like Hurricanes, Wildfires and Man-Made Disasters

DALLAS, June 3, 2021

What’s the news? In advance of the 2021 storm season, [FirstNet[®], Built with AT&T^{*}](#) – the nation’s only network built by public safety, for public safety – is introducing “[ROG the Dog](#)” animal assisted therapy to support public safety on the front lines. 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.

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 is currently comprised of **over 30 animals** located across the U.S.

What is the 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 Response Operations Group works with the agency to assess the situation and either deploy an asset, or identify and 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 Congress and the first responder community 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 subscribed – 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.

Where can I find more information? For more about the value FirstNet is bringing to public safety, check out [FirstNet.com](#). And go [here](#) for more FirstNet news.

What people are saying:

Jason Porter

President, Public Sector and FirstNet, AT&T

“Nothing is more important than the lives of first responders and the people they serve. That’s why we’re bringing ROG the Dog to the front lines for the men and 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 ensuring that those who put their lives on the line are at their best day in and day out.”

Rhonda Kelly

National Director, Health, Wellness and Resilience, GMR Life

Executive Director, All Clear Foundation

“Emergency response work has always been challenging, demanding so much from those sworn to protect our communities. 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.”

¹ Purvis, 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>

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

⁵ As of April 2021.

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