

Media release

Public Safety Network delivers big cellular communications capability boost for NZ's emergency services

26 July 2023

The launch of a new globally-leading critical communications cellular service means New Zealand's emergency services now have better access to mobile broadband and around 28,000 square kilometres of additional coverage to help them serve the community and stay safe.

Now live, the multi-network cellular roaming service is the first Public Safety Network service delivered on budget and on schedule by Next Generation Critical Communications, on behalf of Hato Hone St John, Police, Wellington Free Ambulance and Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

The new multi-network solution for the emergency services means their phones and wireless devices can use both Spark and One NZ mobile networks to share critical information, including data, voice, video and images.

"The ability to move seamlessly across the two networks will improve coverage, resilience and reliability for the emergency services. Emergency responders will now have better, more reliable cellular access to the information they need when they are out doing their jobs," says Steve Ferguson, Director of Next Generation Critical Communications.

Police Minister, Ginny Andersen welcomes the new Public Safety Network service.

"The Public Safety Network's new cellular roaming service will significantly improve the services' ability to access mobile broadband, which is really important for the technology they use to do their jobs and serve the community. It will also help them to stay safe and work together. It's good news for our communities," she says.

Being able to use both the Spark and One NZ networks means a 6.5 per cent uplift in useable coverage for emergency responders over the current state. This means the emergency services gain coverage at approximately 15,000 households to support 40,000 more New Zealanders. This will be especially beneficial for emergency responders working in rural areas.

Hato Hone Saint John, Police, Wellington Free Ambulance, and Fire and Emergency New Zealand will now begin migrating their current phones and devices onto the Public

Safety Network cellular roaming service. By the end of December (2023), it is expected more than 15,000 emergency services staff will be using the roaming service. A further 15,000 vehicles and other devices will be upgraded over the next 12 months and using Public Safety Network cellular roaming.

Additionally, any new Public Safety Network capable phones or wireless devices acquired by the four emergency services will be able to use Public Safety Network cellular services. There is also scope for other public safety agencies to use the Public Safety Network's cellular services in the future.

A second Public Safety Network cellular service will launch in 2024 to give emergency services dedicated high priority access to the Spark and One NZ networks over all other users at times of network congestion or degradation.

"This priority access to both Spark and One NZ networks for voice, video and data will mean an unprecedented level of cellular communications capability and resilience for New Zealand's responders and their operational responses," Mr Ferguson says.

The Public Safety Network's cellular services are being delivered by Hourua (a Spark and One NZ joint venture) who have come together to meet the enhanced communications needs of our first responders.

ENDS

Contact: Next Generation Critical Communications media: ngcc2@police.govt.nz or 021 275 5466.

Watch: [Introducing Public Safety Network Cellular Roaming](#) (video 2.23 mins)

About the Public Safety Network Te Kupenga Marutau

The Public Safety Network Te Kupenga Marutau is a significant infrastructure project, investing \$1.4 billion over 10 years to build and operate, roll out new devices to emergency services staff, stations and vehicles, and decommission the existing radio network.

The Public Safety Network consists of three complementary elements: a digital land mobile radio, cellular services and personal alerting. The Public Safety Network will provide the emergency services with modern, secure and resilient critical communications that enable them to do their jobs, stay safe and support our communities.

About Next Generation Critical Communications Poutama Whai Tikanga Pāpāho

Next Generation Critical Communications (NGCC) is the government's leading advisor on critical communications for public safety in New Zealand. NGCC's mission is to modernise the communications capability of New Zealand's emergency services to deliver more information, to more places in real time. It is responsible for delivering a new Public Safety Network.

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