

Highlights from a recent AT&T webcast on advancing mobile capabilities

STAY SECURE, RESPONSIVE EVEN IN EMERGENCIES

AT&T offers several products to help federal customers maintain safe mobile connectivity and operations at all times

THE SPEAKER:

Jenny Barnes, Senior Product Manager, Public Safety Solutions

With the number of smart phones set to outpace the number of people in the world, it's clear this is a technology that will only continue to evolve and advance. Incorporating it into federal agencies' operations involves more than simply signing up for a voice and data plan. Among the special concerns government managers face are disaster recovery and security.

"We understand that coverage is king," said Jenny Barnes, senior product manager for public safety solutions at AT&T, during a Nov. 15, 2012, webcast titled "Commercial Technologies to Enrich the Mobile Capabilities of Your Agency."

Whether it's business as usual or maintaining workflow during extenuating circumstances such as natural or manmade disasters, AT&T is committed to keeping organizations connected. Currently, the company moves an average of 28.9 petabytes of data and 2.5 billion text messages daily, she said. With that much information

to protect, AT&T has invested billions of dollars in infrastructure and studied past events to glean lessons learned to apply in the future.

Disaster recovery

AT&T's approach to disaster recovery boils down to three P's, Barnes said:

- Proactivity.
- Predictability.
- Prevention.

When an event is predictable, such as the Olympics or President Barack Obama's second presidential inauguration, the company mobilizes its equipment to handle the increased traffic. That also applies to natural events, such as Hurricane Sandy, which ravaged the Northeast in October.

"When we know a hurricane is coming in, we will drive as close with as many vehicles as we've got – we have over 320 vehicles – that are central offices, satellite cell towers, back-haul infrastructure," Barnes said. "We'll get as close as we can to that so we can come in as quickly as possible."

During Sandy, the cell site that serves the New York Stock Exchange was hit

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hard. "It was flooded," she said. "When that site went down, we had to figure out – and it really was a shoestring-and-bubble-gum approach – how to get service back up as quickly as possible. What we did is we took a very simple gas-powered generator. We had to snake a connection up 22 stories to the rooftop of that building. It worked. It worked well while we were getting the network back up and running. We have to get creative."

For unanticipated events such as earthquakes or the 2001 terrorist attacks, the response is more reactive. "We may not be there as quickly as you want us to be, but we will get there as quickly as possible," Barnes said.

In addition to its fleet of 320 vehicles, the company also has 30 Hazmat-trained employees and four regional emergency operations centers in addition to a Global Standard network operations center in Bedminster, N.J.

"Many times, the cell tower may actually be up, but the wire line infrastructure that connects and takes you back out to the public may be what's down," Barnes said. "It requires a number of vehicles, a number of personnel to get that network back up and running."

Staying connected

The company offers several solutions for disaster response needs. The Remote

CATEGORIZING INFORMATION

CLASSIFIED – Material considered confidential, secret or top secret by the U.S. government.

SENSITIVE – Also known as sensitive but unclassified, for official use only or controlled unclassified information, it also encompasses data under medical, financial and other industry classifications for confidential personal information, unclassified/law enforcement sensitive or law enforcement/public safety investigations/operations information.

CLEAR – Everyday communications with no security requirements.

LISTEN/LEARN:

For a replay of the webcast, go to: fcw.com/MobileCapabilitiesWebcast

“When you’re making conversation, have as much security on that mobile device as possible. It definitely is something you’ve got to take seriously. You can’t think, ‘Oh, they don’t want to listen to me.’”

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Mobility Zone, a portable cell tower sold directly to the federal government, for instance, can be deployed within 30 minutes. It uses one of two backups: IP or satellite.

“There are some limitations to it,” Barnes said. “It is picocell service, so it’s a smaller cell tower. It will support up to 28 concurrent calls and will also support EDGE services. So in terms of data, you’ve got slower speeds – 100 to 200 kbps, enough for e-mail, enough for some [Global Positioning Systems], certainly not video.”

The Zone is available in configurations including fly-away, vehicle-based or fixed and is managed by a white list that controls who can make calls. It uses an AT&T mast and antenna that reach 20 to 21 feet. Sitting atop a hill or building, it gets about a half-mile of service. The box is a little larger than a data router, a little smaller than a mini fridge, and will house up to two radios, Barnes added. It uses one of two aspects to get back to the core AT&T mobility network: via the satellite or your own satellite service or Wi-Fi or WiMAX or via the Internet with a secure virtual private network.

“This thing looks, acts, like another cell site that we allow you to purchase and we manage on our network. The benefit of this is you don’t have to wait. If we can’t get there within 30 minutes, but you have an immediate need, you can set that up and deploy,” Barnes said.

Another offering is AT&T Satellite Augmented Mobile, a TerreStar GENYS Windows Mobile 6.5 smart phone that has 3G cellular and satellite capabilities, enabling users to keep their cell phone numbers and switch to satellite as needed.

Additionally, AT&T can mobilize agencies’ solutions to ensure that citizens can

stay informed by accessing government websites from any mobile device. But that’s not as simple as scaling images.

Device screen size, disparate back-end systems and immature consumer off-the-shelf mobile services are all challenges.

“If the operation is disconnected, how do you keep that traffic alive?” Barnes said.

In November, AT&T released Enhanced Push to Talk: a voice-over-IP service that is “lightning fast,” Barnes said. “We have reinvented advanced Push to Talk.”

Highlights of the new service include:

- Sub-second latency.
- Fast call setup times.
- Ability to view real-time presence/status of up to 250 talk group members.
- Supervisory override functionality.
- Optional interoperability with land mobile radio systems.
- Wide device choice including Android, BlackBerry, Windows Mobile Embedded and ruggedized devices.

Additionally, the company plans to roll out in the first quarter of 2013 a Push-to-Talk-over-Wi-Fi solution.

Voice security

There are several levels of secure information, according to federal classifications. Secret and top secret are the most protected while clear requires no special treatment. AT&T has options to cover all categories. Barnes said one of the more popular services is AT&T Encrypted Mobile Voice, which includes a chip installed on a BlackBerry or Android – and soon an Apple iPhone – that enables additional encryption on top of what’s already built in.

“When you’re making conversation, have as much security on that mobile device as possible,” Barnes said. “It definitely is something you’ve got to take seriously. You can’t think, ‘Oh, they don’t want to listen to me.’ Unfortunately, you may be at the right place and the right time and your calls may be intercepted,” she said.

Encrypted Mobile Voice is a hardware and software solution that uses BlackBerry and Android devices and has an AT&T Trust Group enabling users to talk to anyone who has an AT&T device. It allows for roaming and supports 3G, LTE and Wi-Fi so users can make fully encrypted calls over a Wi-Fi connection.

What’s ahead

AT&T envisions a time when the three items people can’t leave home without – cell phone, wallet and keys – will be rolled into one apparatus.

“Our plan is to have all three on that device,” Barnes said. “You’ll have access to your car, you’ll have access to your home, to your buildings, etc., via some security built into your mobile device. The same thing is true with cyber banking. We want to make that as hardened as possible so that indeed it does become your wallet. You have your identification built in that you can actually authenticate on that mobile device.”

All of these efforts point to AT&T’s commitment to ensuring safe, secure and reliable connectivity and communications in any situation. •

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