

# Verizon to lift wireless data caps on public safety next week, with immediate help for Hawaii, West Coast

## *Urgent Communications*

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Aug 24, 2018

Verizon announces that its public-safety customers nationwide will be eligible for unlimited data plans with no data caps—and no price increase to existing subscription packages—starting next week, with the new plans being implemented immediately in Hawaii and on the West Coast to address expected near-term emergency situations.

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“The great news is that we’re not going to require any of our customers to change any of their service pricing,” Mike Maiorana, Verizon’s senior vice president-public sector, said yesterday during an interview with *IWCE’s Urgent Communications*. “Based on the same service pricing that they’re used to spending with us, we’re adding these additional capabilities and functionality.”

Key features that will be included in the new data plans for “first responders”—police, fire, EMS, emergency-management and federal justice agencies like the FBI, CIA and the Secret Service—is a removal of all data caps or access restrictions, according to Tami Erwin, executive vice president of operation for Verizon Wireless.

“That plan will include the removal of speed caps and includes unlimited access to the network for our first responders,” Erwin said during an interview with *IWCE’s Urgent Communications*. “It really provides unlimited access to the data network, which I think is so important for those who have their lives on the line.

“This is not a pricing change. This is matter of changing the access, in response to what we have heard from first responders and public safety, relevant to exactly what it is that they need to be successful in the roles that they’re in.”

This new data plan includes the implementation of priority data access via any kind of mobile device, Erwin said.

“[Priority data access] is always on, once the account is provisioned for priority access ... It’s one of those enhancements to the plan,” she said. “For smartphones, we introduced this capability to first responders in April. So, this is capability that we built into the network and introduced to our product team in April. It will be built into both of these plans, ... and when the customer accepts the terms, they will have access not only to the changes in how data is managed but changes to the priority access.”

Priority access also will be included in the data plans for entities supporting first responders, Erwin said. These customers will not have data caps removed entirely from their plans, but they will be implemented in a manner that is designed to provide much more flexibility than has existed previously, when Verizon has throttled data speeds significantly if a device uses more than 25 GB of data in a month, she said.

Under the new plan, public-safety support customers would be allowed to exceed the contractual data cap in two consecutive months without being subjected to throttling, Erwin said. Data speeds for these customers would be throttled only when the user exceeds the cap threshold for a third consecutive month, and then throttling would be executed with a reduction to 3G speeds, she said.

“As an example, let’s say in the first month that you use 50 gigs of data. In the second month, you use 75 gigs of data. In the third month, you use 15 gigs of data [below the 25 GB monthly threshold], then you reset and start over,” Erwin said. “So, it’s not the sum of the three but the sequential overage three months in a row that would then trigger the speed cap.

“If, in January and February you have overages, but you move into March and don’t [have overages], then reset. You move into April and May [as months when data overages would not result in speed-cap enforcement]. It’s really intended to provide flexibility in how public safety could support first responders, in the event that they have an overage.”