

MABAS Special Communications Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 16, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at Lisle-Woodridge Fire Station 1. Present were committee members Dave Dato, Wauconda; Paul Maplethorpe, Round Lake; John Lozar, Ducomm; Dave Riddle, Channahon; Bill Bouma, Mount Pleasant; and Larry Matkaitis, Chicago.

Chief Bouma introduced Carl Guse, Frequency Specialist with the Wisconsin Highway Patrol and APCO's Wisconsin frequency coordinator.

Chief Dato reported that the MABAS Executive Board approved Advocacy Statement #6, CTCSS tones, and the Amendment to Statement #1, Interoperability, at the April 24, 2003 meeting.

Discussion ensued concerning the distribution of the approved Advocacy Statements. It is apparent that many Divisions and Departments are not receiving and/or understanding the statements. It was suggested that President Reardon distribute the statements through the e-mail network.

Chief Dato presented a letter from Chief MacArthur, president of the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association, concerning the proposed Amber Alert system in Illinois. Chief MacArthur was requesting that MABAS dispatch Amber Alerts via the IFERN frequency and alerting system. The discussion centered around the huge coordination effort that would be required each time an Amber Alert was issued, detailing order for Divisions to tone out. The overall time that the IFERN frequency would be busy for these alerts was also considered. The use of the NOAA weather alert, as described by Chief MacArthur, was felt to be a better system that would alert far more than the IFERN frequency, and would be more efficient use of radio spectrum. A broadcast fax system to each fire station was also viewed as a viable option. The consensus of the Committee was the use of IFERN for Amber Alerts was not a good idea.

Chief Maplethorpe discussed the recent use of IFERN by LaPorte, Indiana as a repeater output. Chief Maplethorpe reported that he spoke with a John Sullivan at LaPorte who advised that using the IFERN frequency was a mistake and promised that it would be promptly corrected.

Chief Matkaitis reported that Chicago is in the process of reprogramming all of its portable radios. All radios will have access to the fire alarm office. It was recommended that Chicago program and identify all of the MABAS fireground channels to permit interoperability with suburban departments. This will be forwarded to Bill Carter.

A discussion ensued with Mr. Guse concerning the expansion of the MABAS program into the State of Wisconsin and its effects on existing frequency use in that State. Mr. Guse reported that 154.265 MHz (IFERN) is known as WISTAC1 in Wisconsin. In addition, 153.830 MHz (RED Fireground) is used as a repeater input in the Portage and Wisconsin Dells areas. He reported that Wisconsin has established 151.280 MHz as a statewide mutual aid channel for all disciplines, similar to Illinois' IREACH.

The discussion shifted to the protection of certain frequencies for mutual aid and fireground operations. It was felt that the International Association of Fire Chiefs, APCO, NENA, and IMSA should become more involved in protecting certain frequencies for these uses.

The recent narrowband mandate from the FCC was discussed. Mr. GUSE reported that the rule has yet to be published in the Federal Register so certain deadlines have yet to be imposed. Once published, a comment period will begin. He reported that APCO has comments already prepared.

Funding for Division 15's frequency relocation was discussed. Since a frequency has yet to be determined, a true cost can not be prepared. The frequency of 154.325 MHz, eyed as a possible solution for Division 15, was recently coordinated by LaPorte, Indiana. Chiefs Dato and Maplethorpe and John Lozar from Ducomm will visit Channahon on July 2nd to conduct site surveys and frequency signal strength measurements.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m. **The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 21, 2003 at 1000 hours at Lisle-Woodridge Station 1.** Please mark your calendars.