

# **MABAS Special Communications Committee**

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **November 17, 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; Steve Rauter, Lisle-Woodridge; John Lozar, Ducomm; Dave Riddle, Channahon; Gregg Riddle, IFCA/Wescom; Bob Mierop, Bollingbrook; Bill Bouma; Mt. Pleasant and Tom Mefferd, DuPage OEM.

#### **Division 15**

Discussion ensued concerning the migration of several Division 15 departments from 154.295 MHz. The concept of using 154.310 MHz and narrowband frequency 155.355 MHz were considered along with several pro's and con's to immediate migration to the narrowband frequency. It was decided to prepare an FCC application for Division 15 on 154.310 MHz. This will buy time while the final plan is developed.

#### **MABAS Website**

The [www.MABAS.org](http://www.MABAS.org) website was discussed. Chief Maplethorpe reported that the Communications Committee has been given authority to fully implement the site and regulate its content. Discussion ensued concerning appropriate content for the website.

Mr. Lozar entered the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

#### **Narrowband Conversion**

A discussion ensued concerning the eventual migration to narrowband operations and the need for master planning. It was felt that the FCC will not extend its wide-band deadlines they recently published and departments will be forced into narrowband operations sooner than later. Coordination of this conversion will be particularly difficult for the many statewide frequencies used by police, fire, EMS, public works and emergency management agencies. (IFERN, MABAS firegrounds, IREACH, ISPERN, ESMARN, MERCI, etc.)

If the FCC doesn't amend its rulemaking, fire departments will be unable to purchase new radio equipment for wideband operation beginning in 2008. The consensus of the committee was that we should carefully review the impact of the FCC's narrowband decision once the final version is reported. Developing a definitive conversion date for narrowband operation on all MABAS frequencies as well as other statewide public safety frequencies will be required.

A/C Rauter suggested that MABAS or Illinois Fire Chiefs Association sponsor seminars to educate the fire service of the true implication of the FCC's rulemaking. The consensus was that the issue has been around since 1995 but is still greatly misunderstood. The seminar concept was well received.

Mr. Mefferd reported that he is meeting with Speaker Hastert on December 15<sup>th</sup> and requested an estimate of cost for conversion to narrowband for all public safety agencies in Illinois. The FCC's action concerning narrowband is being viewed as an unfunded Federal mandate. Chief's Dato and Maplethorpe will work on an estimate. A/C Rauter will prepare a fast survey to use as a basis for the estimate.

### **MABAS Statewide License**

Chief Maplethorpe reported that funding from ITTF was not secured to perform statewide licensing by Division for the eight (8) MABAS radio frequencies. Since time for frequency coordination is running short, Chief Dato discussed the issue of a statewide license with President Reardon, who approved the concept. Chief Maplethorpe spoke with Vice-President Tonne who also supported the statewide license application. The application will also include twenty (20) temporary fixed base stations for disaster coordination and response.

While the concern over improper use of the frequencies and related liability still exists, Chief Maplethorpe has recommended that the MABAS Executive Board adopt a policy addressing shared use of the MABAS licensed frequencies by MABAS member departments, or other entities operating under MABAS auspices. This policy should have several major points:

- It allows use of the MABAS frequencies for official fire/EMS related activities by MABAS members or agencies interfacing with MABAS members at emergency and disaster scenes or training events.
- Use of the frequencies will be contingent upon the user agreeing to abide by all pertinent FCC rules and regulations as well as MABAS policies, procedures and advocacy statements.
- Use of the frequencies that are inconsistent with the policy will not be approved or sanctioned by MABAS and therefore the user will be totally responsible for their transmissions on the affected frequencies.

It was suggested that a draft policy be distributed to the Communications Committee members prior to the December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting to allow for review. This will allow for revisions and approval of the draft at the December meeting. The final draft could then be forwarded via the MABAS e-net to all Divisions prior to the January MABAS Executive Board meeting.

The Committee fully supported the action and authorized Chief Maplethorpe to file the necessary application for the eight (8) MABAS frequencies with IMSA and the FCC.

Chief Bouma reported that Mr. Guse of the Wisconsin Highway Patrol has prepared a license application for statewide implementation of the MABAS frequencies, as well as IREACH, in Wisconsin.

### **SIEC Committee**

Chief Dato reported on a discussion he had with Illinois Terrorism Task Force Director Chamness concerning the need for establishment of a Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee. The need for a statewide working committee and planning group has been identified.

Mr. Mefferd reported that IEMA has proposed licensing the VTACH and UTACH interoperability frequencies for statewide use. He also indicated that IEMA has proposed that they control the use of these frequencies.

Chief Riddle left the meeting at 10:58 a.m.

Chief Dato expressed his opinion that an SIEC should be formed for overall coordination of disaster communications in Illinois. Chief Dato suggests creating a committee with a diverse public safety make-up similar to the IREACH Governing Board. Mr. Mefferd felt the ITTF Communications Committee may also be appropriate for this task.

### **Wisconsin Communications Plan**

Chief Bouma reported that the Wisconsin Fire Chiefs Education Committee has endorsed MABAS and is encouraging statewide implementation. Mr. Guse's draft communications frequency plan was reviewed. The draft plan includes the eight (8) MABAS frequencies as well as IREACH. Frequency names approved by MABAS have been included in Wisconsin's plan.

### **Fireground Communications Plan**

The need for a model training program available to MABAS members for training officers and firefighters in multi-frequency operations at fire and emergency incidents was stressed. B/C Mierop will prepare a power-point type presentation.

### **Video Conferencing**

B/C Mierop reported that he is waiting for pricing to use the junior college video conferencing network by MABAS for Executive Board meetings. IEMA's use of IDPH's network was also discussed. Other options are also being explored.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m. **The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 15, 2003 at 1000 hours at Lisle-Woodridge Station 1.** Please mark your calendars.