



MABAS Communications Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2004
Draft 2

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at the Lisle Village Hall. Present were committee members Paul Maplethorpe, Round Lake; Dave Dato, Wauconda; Steve Rauter, Lisle-Woodridge; John Lozar, DuComm; Bill Bouma, Mt. Pleasant; David Riddle; Channahon; Bob Mierop, Bolingbrook; Gregg Riddle, IFCA; Dennis Higgins, Livingston County. Also present were Carl Guse, Wisconsin Highway Patrol and Mike Moos, Illinois State Fire Marshall's Office.

II. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

Chief Riddle corrected the spelling of his last name on page 2.

Chief Bouma moved to approve the September 20, 2004 meeting minutes as corrected. Second by D/C Rauter. All AYES; motion carried.

III. Milwaukee County Interoperability

Chief Maplethorpe summarized a meeting held in Milwaukee County to discuss interoperability issues with 800 MHz systems used in that area. Chiefs/representatives from Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, the city of Milwaukee, and Motorola were present, along with Chiefs Bouma, Dato and Maplethorpe, Gregg Riddle and Carl Guse.

Numerous issues were discussed and models considered that permit departments that use primary frequencies other than VHF to communicate within the MABAS model and with mutual aid departments. One concept identified the need for VHF-low, UHF, 700 and 800 MHz frequencies for fire mutual aid that parallel the MABAS VHF plan. (i.e. 800 IFERN, 800 RED, 800 White, 800 BLUE, etc.)

Milwaukee County departments plan to establish fixed base stations on IFERN and utilize cross-band patches to provide interoperability. Establishing statewide tactical channels in the non-VHF bands was discussed, along with difficulties finding available spectrum.

D/C Rauter commented that a properly organized Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee would be the correct forum to discuss statewide tactical channels. He reinforced the need for the SIEC to be established.

The use of the National Public Safety Planning Advisory Committee (NPSPAC) 800 interoperability channels for tactical operations has been considered by several areas that use 800 MHz frequencies. It was pointed out that police tactical teams are also using these channels for their operations. At a major event, the NPSPAC channels will become overused with conflicting traffic on the same frequencies.

Chief Dato commented that a solution may reside in the Nextel refarming due to the consensus plan. A block of separate interoperability channels could be assigned for fire, police, EMS, EMA, public works, etc. Mr. Guse reported that in the 700 MHz band, numerous interoperability channels already exist, and that radio equipment capable of both 700 and 800 will be common in the future. Mr. Guse agreed to perform searches in both Wisconsin & Illinois to determine if any frequencies are available for consideration as tactical frequencies in the 800 MHz band.

IV. Rock Island County

Chief Maplethorpe reported that he and Chief Dato met with representatives of Divisions 39 and 43 in Coal Valley on November 13th. The issue of Rock Island County's use of IFERN for local dispatch was the focus of the discussion. It was learned that four departments in the County dispatch on IFERN while five others use 154.190 MHz. The departments represented understood the need for a frequency change, but desired a funding source as well as a method to improve their overall communications system coverage. The basics of their existing dispatch system were reviewed and several simple suggestions for improvement discussed.

The frequency of 154.310 MHz was suggested. IMSA evaluated the frequency and felt it was a possibility with concurrence of the Moline Fire Department. The departments were asked to produce radio inventory information by mid-January for evaluation by this Committee and possible funding recommendation to the ITTF. Mr. Moos suggested that information be forwarded to ITTF for funding in the FY05 budget.

East Moline and Rock Island had representatives at the meeting to discuss interoperability issues between VHF based departments and three departments that use a private 800 MHz trunking system. Solutions similar to those considered in Milwaukee County were discussed.

V. New Lenox - Southwest Central Dispatch

Chief Riddle reported that he spoke to Chief Hassek of New Lenox about the station alerting systems that utilizes 154.280 MHz (WHITE Fireground). He was referred to Southwest Central Dispatch's Director Bill Shanley. Chief Maplethorpe reported that he discussed the situation with Director Shanley on November 1st. Chiefs Bouma and Dato and Gregg Riddle were present during the speakerphone conversation. Director Shanley related that the station alerting system was used by several departments. He expressed his position concerning the frequency use and agreed to discuss the matter with the affected fire chiefs. Chief Riddle agreed to follow-up.

VI. Gibson Area Ambulance (154.295 MHz)

Mr. Higgins reported that his son Joe manages the Gibson Area Ambulance Service. Chief Maplethorpe reported on his discussion concerning the frequency coordination in 2002 by IMSA. Andrew Szekely of IMSA indicated that they would be willing to assist with frequency relocation for this ambulance service. Eligibility for the frequency was also discussed. Chief Maplethorpe will follow-up with Joe Higgins.

VII. Box Alarm Cards

The need to step up the progress towards creating a standardized card in an electronic format was presented. Chief Bouma provided several samples that were reviewed. D/C Rauter suggested that the Committee standardize on a portrait format. Discussion ensued and the consensus was to have the final product contain five (5) standardized areas:

Header: To include the Department Name, Box Alarm Number, Card Type and/or Location.

Still Alarm: Area could have multiple levels, not MABAS dispatch responsibility.

MABAS Alarm - To Scene: Multiple Levels

Change of Quarters: Multiple Levels

Special Instructions: If needed.

The consensus of the Committee was to eliminate the four character identifiers and use department names. Chief Bouma recommended identifying a specific numbering system for alarm types similar to Division 104. The consensus of the group was to not recommend a box alarm numbering scheme, although certain universal box alarm numbers may be reserved.

A sub-committee was formed to address the standardized card. Chief Bouma, B/C Mierop and Gregg Riddle volunteered for the committee. It was suggested that MABAS dispatchers be involved as well. Mr. Riddle will contact TRICOMM and D/C Rauter suggested Marie Vokoun from DuComm. The sub-committee agreed to report back to the full Committee in December to permit a recommendation from the Communications Committee to the Executive Board in January.

VIII. STARCOM 21

Chief Maplethorpe reported that the only comments received from the Committee after the September meeting concerning STARCOM 21 were from D/C Rauter. Chief Dato reported that a revised survey from ITTF may be to address and explain the purpose of the radios and issues concerning base station operation.

IX. Mobile Command Posts

The status of the ITTF Mobile Command Posts was discussed. A prototype from LDV should be ready in the 1st quarter of 2005. Confusion over the purpose of the vehicles was discussed. Chief Dato clarified that these units are intended for unified command, not communications. Only limited communications capabilities are planned. The \$200,000 budgeted for the vehicles will be used for the mobile workspace, not communications hardware.

X. MERCI Base Stations

Coordination Channel: Carl Guse suggested that a DPL of 156 be assigned for use on MERCI 280 (155.280). This could be implemented statewide in both Illinois and Wisconsin for hospital-to-hospital and hospital-to-scene communications during disaster or mass casualty emergencies.

MERCI Base Station Project: The base station project with IDPH was briefly discussed. It was suggested that Greg Scott be invited to the December meeting for discussions about base station specifications.

XI. Statewide Information Dissemination

Mike Moos from the Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal was present at the meeting to discuss methods for dissemination of secure information on a statewide basis to all Illinois fire departments. He expressed concerns over the current e-mail and/or faxed based systems that are in use. Approximately 75% of Illinois fire departments have fax numbers listed with OSFM and only 57% have e-mail addresses. Mr. Moos also expressed concern that many e-mail addresses are personal and are not updated as chiefs change. Illinois OSFM is looking for a single system to disseminate information statewide on a timely basis.

Mr. Moos reported that \$1.45 million has been budgeted through the ITTF to provide EMNet at each PSAP in Illinois. The potential to provide EMNet, or a similar system, for every fire department in the state was discussed. Pros and cons for this satellite based system, and the requirement for an internet connection, were considered. Mr. Moos estimates the cost to provide EMNet to each fire department at \$4.5 million. Costs of monthly service or internet provider fees were considered.

Other methods for secured dissemination were also discussed. The use of the Illinois Law Enforcement Administrative Data System (LEADS) was also considered a viable back-up for secure, authenticated, two way communications between the majority of PSAP's in Illinois.

The need for timely distribution of information to the personnel that need to know was a concern expressed by Chief Riddle. Providing information only to PSAPs was an area of concern. The current e-mail network is also problematic if the recipient doesn't open the mail in a timely fashion.

Another use of this type of system might include daily, weekly, training bulletins, legislative updates, important information, etc. It was expressed that the more the system is used, the more competent the end users will be during times of emergency or disaster. IFSI could be a partner for the training potential. The need for funding was also expressed.

Mr. Moos agreed to spearhead this program and work with MABAS to develop a new model.

XII. Old Business

None

XIII. New Business

Gregg Riddle reported that a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) class will be held on December 7th in Springfield. Cost is \$25.00.

XIV. Adjournment

Chief Riddle moved to adjourn the meeting. Second by Gregg Riddle. All AYES; the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

The next meeting for the MABAS Communications Committee is scheduled for Monday, December 20, 2004 at 1000 hours. **The location of the meeting will be at the Lisle Village Hall, behind Station 1, at 925 Burlington.** Please mark your calendars.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Maplethorpe

Paul Maplethorpe
Co-Chair