



MABAS Communications Committee

Meeting Minutes

December 20, 2004

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at the DuComm Communications Center. 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; Gregg Riddle, IFCA. Also present were Andrew Sneed and Mitch Viren, Winnebago Sheriff as well as Steve Figved, Will County 9-1-1 and Greg Scott, IDPH Chief of EMS.

II. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

Director Riddle moved to approve the November 15, 2004 meeting minutes as presented. Second by Chief Bouma. All AYES; motion carried.

III. Box Alarm Card Sub-Committee

Chief Bouma reported on the meeting of the box alarm card sub-committee. The following points were presented:

- Eliminate the department abbreviations from the cards, use complete names.
- Each department should identify only one primary MABAS Division and primary MABAS dispatch.
- The committee feels that a MABAS-wide box alarm format will be unworkable; however each division should adopt a standardized format for all departments within the division.
- Leave the current nomenclature for the Box Alarm, Second Alarm, etc.
- The cards should provide fire station addresses for change-of-quarters companies.
- Each division should produce a map with fire station locations and provide maps for each change-of-quarters company.
- Establish a recommended practice addressing minimum periods for box alarm card review, new card implementation and proper authorization. Only official cards are signed and dated by the Chief.
- The need to explain the various philosophies for change-of-quarters companies.

- Allowances for multiple still alarm (local dispatch) levels of alarm and unlimited levels of box alarms.

D/C Rauter commented that a listing of minimum requirements for box alarm cards should be prepared. He also indicated that certain box alarm numbers for special responses be “reserved”.

Chief Maplethorpe commented that the Communications Committee was tasked with preparing a generic box alarm card in an electronic format to be made available to new and existing divisions. He felt that the Committee could easily produce a generic format.

Director Tom Mefford, DuPage County EMA, entered the meeting at 10:26 a.m.

D/C Rauter moved to accept the Box Alarm Card Sub-Committee report as presented and offer a standardized card in electronic format. Second by Chief Dato. Discussion:

Director Riddle expressed the sub-committee’s concern that a standardized box alarm card be telecommunicator friendly. Box alarm levels and change-of-quarters should be located in the same area to prevent dispatchers from having to move around the card to locate necessary information.

Discussion ensued concerning the various components and the need to present this as a recommended practice document.

The sub-committee agreed to meet again in January.

D/C Rauter withdrew his motion. Chief Dato withdrew the second.

IV. MERCI Base Station Program

Director Mefford reported that the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF) has approved a program to replace the VHF MERCI base stations at approximately 300 hospitals in Illinois. Chief Scott reported that there are currently approximately 220 hospitals in Illinois with licensed emergency departments.

Director Mefford reported that he and John Meyers from IEMA have developed a specification for this program that involves a two frequency base station. It will be equipped with the local MERCI frequency and MERCI 280 with a DTMF select call system that mirrored the old HEAR pulse dial system.

Director Dennis Higgins, Livingston County 9-1-1, entered the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

Chief Maplethorpe expressed concerns over the design proposed by Director Mefford. He feels that a two channel configuration is insufficient for many areas. Most hospitals in the northern suburbs use both MERCI 340 and MERCI 400. He also expressed that during previous conversations with Carl Guse, it was expressed that a common DPL for MERCI 280 would be beneficial to allow hospitals to communicate across state lines. Chief Maplethorpe recommended a 4 channel base station with multiple receivers to allow simultaneous monitoring of both MERCI 340 and 400 using the local CTCSS tone, MERCI 340 statewide CTCSS tone and MERCI 280 using a statewide tone.

A discussion ensued concerning the use of DTMF selective calling of hospitals versus a common CTCSS or DCS code. Chief Dato also expressed his concerns over the DTMF system, and the complexities it will present for ER nurses attempting to use the system.

Director Mefford reported that all POD hospitals are being equipped with EMNET satellite based systems and voice-over-IP solutions between POD and regional hospitals are being explored. High Frequency (HF) radios are also being installed at POD hospitals to allow for direct communications with IEMA in Springfield.

Chief Scott reported that IDPH desires to replace outdated equipment to permit all hospitals to communicate on MERCI. IDPH also recognizes that VHF MERCI is a proven technology during disasters while satellite and internet based solutions are not. Chief Scott also expressed IDPH's goal of ensuring that all hospitals are properly licensed with the FCC.

D/C Rauter questioned the ability of a single receiver to decode multiple CTCSS tones simultaneously. Director Mefford reported that Mr. Myers feels that the MTR2000 from Motorola has that capability using a wildcard. Several committee members feel that that information is incorrect. Chief Maplethorpe voiced his concerns over proposing the MTR2000 base station for hospital use due to its lack of receiver selectivity.

Director Mefford reported that \$3.7 million has been budgeted for the MERCI base project. He stressed the short timeline to order equipment and that IEMA intends to use equipment already bid on state contracts. The PO's must be issued before January 31, 2005.

The consensus from those present was to implement the program properly. D/C Rauter, Chief Dato and Chief Maplethorpe offered to rewrite the specification with Director Mefford and Mr. Meyers ASAP to provide multi-channel capabilities that will be ER nurse friendly. Director Mefford asked that the revised specification be completed by December 31st.

V. IREACH Base Stations

Chief Dato reported that approximately one-half of the counties without IREACH base stations have yet to complete the FCC licensing procedures.

Chief Riddle left the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Director Mefford reported that the intent is to provide the same mobile radio as will be provided for the VHF interoperability project for use as the IREACH base stations. The radio will include a 110 VAC power supply and a tone remote adapter for connection to a dispatch console if desired. Another discussion ensued and it was expressed that an actual base station with tone remote could be purchased for less than the project budgeted amount.

VI. VHF Interoperability Mobiles

Chief Dato reported that Central Management Services bid out the radios and Motorola was awarded the contract. MaComm has filed an objection, however it is felt that the objection will not go anywhere. MABAS has issued a purchase order for the fire service and IESMA has issued a PO for the emergency management agencies. Chief Dato did report that ILEAS voted not to continue with the project for law enforcement.

VII. Old Business

D/C Rauter reported that updated information for the new MABAS divisions has been posted on the website.

VIII. New Business

None

IX. Adjournment

D/C Rauter moved to adjourn the meeting. Second by Chief Dato. All AYES; the meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

The next meeting for the MABAS Communications Committee is scheduled for Monday, January 17, 2005 at 1000 hours. **The location of the meeting will be at the DuComm Communications Center in Glendale Heights.** Please mark your calendars.

The Box Alarm Card sub-committee will also meet on January 17, 2005 at 8:00 a.m. at DuComm.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Maplethorpe

Paul Maplethorpe
Co-Chair

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