



## MABAS Communications Committee Meeting Minutes April 18, 2005

### 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; Bob Mierop, Bolingbrook; John Lozar, Ducomm; Dave Riddle, Chanahon; Dennis Higgins, Livingston County; Tom Mefford, DuPage County OEM; and Andy Sneed, Winnebago County Sheriff. Attending via speakerphone was Mike Moos, OSFM.

### II. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

**D/C Rauter moved to approve the March 21, 2005 meeting minutes as submitted. Second by B/C Mierop.** A discussion ensued concerning comments sent via e-mail by Tom Mefford concerning various ITTF projects. **All AYES; motion carried.**

### III. Rock Island County

Chief Maplethorpe reported that several Rock Island County departments have applied for FCC authorizations on the proposed frequency of 154.310 MHz. Director Mefford related that the ITTF Communications Committee has concerns about funding additional frequency switch projects, and that Director Chamness has indicated that funding is not available.

The consensus of the committee was to address a letter to the Rock Island County departments stating that in conversation with the ITTF Communications Committee co-chair, that funding for their frequency switch is probably not available. Further, the MABAS Communications Committee recommends that 9-1-1 surcharge money be considered for this project. Chief Maplethorpe will draft the letter.

### IV. New Lenox - Southwest Central (154.280 MHz)

Chief Maplethorpe distributed copies of the letter received from Southwest Central Dispatch concerning their use of 154.280 for station alerting. The consensus of the Committee remains that Southwest Central's use of 154.280 is a violation of FCC rules as well as MABAS policy.

B/C Mierop agreed to contact Brian Leahy at Clarendon Hills, and Chief Riddle agreed to contact Chief Grady at Frankfort, to discuss the matter further. The central theme should be that Southwest Central's use of the frequency is causing harmful interference to fellow MABAS members, which violates MABAS doctrine, and that the Committee also feels that the use is a violation of FCC rules which may create a potential legal problem for Southwest Central and member departments that are using the frequency.

**V. Gibson Area Ambulance (154.295 MHz)**

Chief Maplethorpe reported that IMSA has recommended the frequency of 155.985 MHz for the new repeater output for this ambulance service, relocating them from 154.295 MHz (BLUE Fireground). The only issue is that 155.985 is a mobile only frequency. Diane Tossani at IMSA is researching a waiver further. Dennis Higgins agreed to have Gibson Area Ambulance monitor the proposed frequency for interference.

**VI. Advocacy Statement #10**

MABAS Advocacy Statement #10 (Draft 2) was presented for consideration. Discussion centered on the use of IFERN and/or IFERN2 for hospital bypass situations in non-metropolitan areas. Chief Sneed discussed by-pass and dispatch issues for Division 8. Consideration was given to phasing in the hospital bypass portion of the Statement. The consensus was to not change the document and encourage affected MABAS Divisions to explore alternate information dissemination procedures.

Director Mefford suggested EMNet as an alternative since each PSAP and POD hospitals will soon be equipped with this service. Mike Moos related that the OSFM's goal is to expand EMNet to each fire department in Illinois.

D/C Rauter suggested that additional language be added to the document addressing other technologies for information dissemination. Chief Maplethorpe suggested that a third paragraph be added to Section 3.1 Background.

**D/C Rauter moved to approve Advocacy Statement #10, *Guideline for the Use of the IFERN and IFERN2 Frequencies*, as submitted with the addition of a third paragraph in Section 3.1, and that the document be sent to the MABAS Executive Board for consideration. Second by B/C Mierop. All AYES; motion carried.**

## **VII. EMNet/LEADS**

Mike Moos reported that ISP Col Bouche, chairman of the LEADS governing board, has agreed to recommend that fire department dispatch centers be allowed to access the LEADS network for Type III messaging. The next LEADS meeting will be in May and Mr. Moos agreed to attend to represent the MABAS Communications Committee.

Mr. Moos reported that OSFM plans to request funding in FY06 to complete EMNet installation in all fire departments in Illinois. Director Mefford expressed his support for the fire service application of EMNet. Director Mefford did express concerns that there may be too many information systems being considered, and that the State should look at this globally.

The consensus of the committee was to draft a resolution supporting EMnet for all Illinois Fire Departments and forward the resolution to the MABAS Executive Board for their consideration. Chief Maplethorpe agreed to draft the resolution.

## **VIII. Motorola Focus Group**

Chief Dato reported that he has been invited to attend a town hall type meeting with approximately 100 Motorola engineers and senior management members on April 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss what Motorola is doing right and wrong in the public safety arena. He has been given 20 minutes to speak to the group and solicited ideas from the Committee.

D/C Rauter started off by requesting dual band (VHF/UHF) radio and/or software defined multi-band radios be marketed for public safety applications. He also expressed that the concept of six levels of interoperability is flawed as it relates to the fire service. The fire service endorses basic simplex tactical communications at the scene and shuns the use of network controllers, switches, patches and other network based solutions. D/C Rauter further expressed his concerns that Motorola has focused on the IT portion of their business and forgotten about the basic RF component. He also expressed concerns over digitally enhanced analog transmissions and their inherent voice delay and feedback problems. Chief Maplethorpe supported that point and expressed his feelings that digital is not the answer for the fire service.

Chief Sneed related that Motorola's newer line of radios work better in digital environments but have become less usable in analog modes. He feels that many of the older radios actually work better on analog than most of the high-end newer products being sold today.

Chief Dato questioned who Motorola is talking to when they get ideas for new radios and or projects. The few big city users do not reflect the majority of fire service agencies throughout the country.

D/C Rauter commented that Motorola needs to understand the need for voice alert paging and the ability to monitor incident status from a pager. Motorola's general lack of understanding of the newer pager technology was also discussed.

Mr. Lozar commented that the fire service will remain on analog for a long time. He also expressed the need for a modern paging encode/decode format to replace two-tone sequential signaling over voice channels. Mr. Lozar expressed his feelings that Motorola's engineers are designing radios that work well for engineers on the bench but are not designed for field applications. He also suggested that Motorola look at IP based system backbones that allow remote monitoring and servicing of systems. Lastly, Mr. Lozar expressed the design for multi-band software defined radios be pushed forward.

Chief Maplethorpe related that 700 MHz is not the savior for the fire service. Trunking technology is also not the answer. Motorola needs to support the basic first responders needs for simple radio systems. Chief Maplethorpe also requested that accessories be standardized across the various models; speaker microphones, chargers, batteries, etc. Lastly Chief Maplethorpe related that smaller isn't always better. Products need to be designed for use by gloved firefighters.

Chief Dato thanked the committee for their input and suggested that he be contacted if any other ideas are developed.

## **IX. Old Business**

### **A. MERCI Base Station Project**

Chief Dato reported that approximately 205 hospitals have responded to IDPH's survey concerning radio licensing. Greg Scott from IDPH feels that there are actually approximately 220 hospitals to be included in this program. Chief Dato reported that the base radios will be equipped with multiple receivers. Chicago area hospitals will be programmed with MERCI 340, 340 Statewide, 400 and 280. The rest of the state will not be equipped with MERCI 400.

The system will also utilize a dial-up encode/decode system with each hospital having a unique identifier. D/C Rauter is coordinating this part of the project, along with CTCSS tones, for IDPH.

**B. IREACH Base Station Project**

Chief Dato reported that 20 base radios have been delivered to the affected counties statewide. There are several antennas still outstanding. The radio is a Motorola MTR2000. Some units were set up for console interface while others were supplied with a stand alone remote unit.

**C. STARCOM21**

Chief Dato reported that Motorola is slowly turning on fixed base sites throughout the state. Mr. Moos questioned when the mobile equipment for fire departments will be delivered. Chief Dato discussed the need for frequency plans and sub-fleet identification for programming purposes. D/C Rauter reported that ISP has a committee working on a fleet map for there agency. Mr. Moos expressed concerns that the time limit for expending funds is almost here.

**D. ITECHS/Incident Frequency Managers**

A lengthy discussion was held (earlier in the meeting) concerning Director Mefford's e-mailed comments concerning ITECS technicians and Incident Frequency Managers. Director Mefford related that the goal is to send two technicians with each trailer to provide for 24 hour coverage using 12 hour shifts. The technicians will be i techyî types and will understand the operation of the equipment. Director Mefford indicated that the Incident Frequency Managers will be management level individuals who possess a thorough understanding of NIMS and Unified Command.

**E. VHF Interoperability Radios**

Chief Dato reported that Motorola demonstrated their proposed VHF interoperability radio package at the ILEAS conference. The kit contained an XTL5000 mobile radio, cigarette lighter power cord and magnet mount antenna in a pelican style case. Several suggestions were made to improve the kit. Chief Reardon will present the package to the fire service.

**X. New Business**

**A. FCC Comment Period**

The Federal Communications Commission has published a comment period through April 28, 2005 regarding additional spectrum requirements of emergency service personnel. Discussion ensued and it was universally agreed that additional public safety spectrum is needed in the VHF and UHF bands, not just 700 MHz. D/C Rauter agreed to pen the comment letter on behalf of the MABAS Communications Committee, although letters are also encouraged from individual fire departments.

It was agreed that the following points are to be included in the comment letter:

- Need for additional spectrum in VHF & UHF bands for public safety.
- Need to protect former IMTS spectrum in the 152 and 157 MHz ranges for PW service.
- The need to force entities that migrate to 700/800 MHz spectrum be forced to "give-back" spectrum in the VHF & UHF bands.

## **XI. Information for the Good of the Committee**

### **A. 700 MHz Regional Planning Committee**

Mr. Lozar will be attending the 700 MHz RPC at the Chicago 9-1-1 Center next week.

### **B. 800 MHz Re-banding Issues**

Several committee members commented on local issues that will cause concerns over the 800 MHz Nextel re-banding.

### **C. Website Updates**

D/C Rauter reported that several enhancements have been completed on the MABAS websites.

### **D. IWARN Update**

Chief Maplethorpe reported on an e-mail received from Terry Weatherford addressing several issues.

### **E. CTCSS on IFERN**

Chief Maplethorpe reminded everyone that the deadline to switch to carrier tone coded squelch (CTCSS or PL) on the IFERN is approaching. (January 1, 2006) He will prepare a notice for mass e-mailing reminding all departments of the change.

### **F. Will County PSAPS**

B/C Mierop reported that Will County has hired a consultant to evaluate communications capabilities of county public safety agencies. This is part of a project to consider merging into 3 PSAPs for the county.

**XII. Adjournment**

**D/C Rauter moved to adjourn the meeting. Second by Mr. Moos. All AYES;  
the meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.**

The next meeting for the MABAS Communications Committee is scheduled for Monday, May 16, 2005 at 1000 hours. **The location of the meeting will be at the DuComm Communications Center in Glendale Heights.** Please mark your calendars.

Respectfully submitted,

*Paul Maplethorpe*

Paul Maplethorpe  
Co-Chair

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