



Mutual Aid Box Alarm System Communications Committee

Meeting Minutes August 21, 2006

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. at Lisle-Woodridge Station 1. Present were committee members Paul Maplethorpe, Round Lake; Steve Rauter, Lisle-Woodridge; Gregg Riddle, IFCA; Bill Bouma, Mt. Pleasant; John Lozar, Ducomm; Bob Mierop, Bolingbrook; Dennis Higgins, Livingston County; and Dave Riddle, Channahon.

II. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

Mr. Riddle moved to approve the June 19, 2006 minutes as presented. Second by Chief Bouma. All AYES; motion carried.

III. Wisconsin MABAS Rules

Chief Bouma discussed proposed language in MABAS Wisconsin's procedures concerning the use of cross-band repeaters/patches to alleviate issues between departments utilizing VHF for fireground communications and those departments that use UHF or 800 MHz. D/C Rauter stressed that the Incident Commander must be able to hear both sides of the proposed patch to prevent an equipment failure from preventing emergency communications to be heard. Consensus of the committee members present indicated that MABAS Wisconsin's proposed procedures met the intent of MABAS' Communications Advocacy Statements.

Chief Riddle, Channahon, entered the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

A lengthy discussion ensued concerning methods to best achieve easy interoperability between fire departments that use different radio bands/technologies. Chief Maplethorpe expressed the opinion that the answer may lie in that all fire departments should use VHF for incident tactical communications, regardless of their primary dispatch technology. D/C Rauter related that in-the-hand solutions utilizing multi-band radios would be another acceptable option. The need for written consensus guidelines was apparent.

The discussion then focused on proper procedures for communicating with change-of-quarters companies and dispatch responsibility. Several different groups are teaching MABAS related programs and all players should be on the same page. It was suggested that a summit type meeting be held to include MABAS VP Lipinski, RED Center, Orland Center, Tammy from Tricomm and members of the Communications Committee to discuss these issues further.

IV. Recommended Practice – Emergency/Evacuation Tone

A brief discussion was held concerning the use of the Repeater Access Code function on Motorola radios for field generated emergency tones on radio channels. The guideline for the use of air horns as an evacuation signal was also discussed and the NFPA cite was presented.

Mr. Riddle moved to approve Recommended Practice #4 – Guideline for Providing Audible Emergency Warning at Emergency Incident Scenes and forward same to the MABAS Executive Board for consideration. Second by D/C Rauter. All AYES; motion carried.

V. Advocacy Statement - Interdivisional Request

No Report

VI. MABAS Radio Test Schedule

Chief Bouma presented his initial document for the revised MABAS Test Schedule. Information is lacking from many divisions concerning their primary and secondary dispatch centers. It was suggested that Chief Reardon blast fax a memo to all MABAS Divisions that requests primary and secondary dispatch center information including emergency, non-emergency and fax telephone numbers. Chief Maplethorpe agreed to forward the request to Chief Reardon.

Chief Maplethorpe suggested that instead of doing all MABAS tests during the first week of each month that the tests be staggered throughout the month. The suggestion was testing on the first Monday, second Tuesday, third Wednesday, fourth Thursday and first Friday. This suggestion was well received and Chief Bouma agreed to make the necessary changes.

VII. Starcom21/MABAS/USAR – Operations Talk Groups

Chief Maplethorpe reported that the Starcom21 network was used by the USAR team during two deployments earlier in August. For the most part, the system worked well south of I-80, with a few exceptions around Springfield.

Chief Maplethorpe also reported that he held a discussion with ITTF Director Chamness concerning additional talkgroups for MABAS. Director Chamness related that he would approve the additional talkgroups upon receipt of a letter from President Reardon. Chief Maplethorpe agreed to forward a draft letter to Chief Reardon.

D/C Rauter related that the use of encryption over the Starcom21 network was not included in the contract with the state of Illinois and therefore will not be supported by Motorola. A discussion ensued about the systems ability to work in encryption mode should encryption keys be loaded into a series of radios.

Finally, Chief Maplethorpe reported that Motorola will be conducting significant system testing in the Chicago metro area and other portions of northern Illinois beginning September 1st. Motorola has asked that the system not be used during this testing period. A notice will be sent to Chief Reardon for blast e-mailing.

VIII. Old Business

A. MERCI Base Station Project

D/C Rauter reported that he has been working with hospitals and radio vendors in the Chicago area to resolve CTCSS issues. D/C Rauter related that originally Chicago Fire coordinated CTCSS codes for hospitals within the city, but information concerning that program is scarce. D/C Rauter related that as issues arise, he is assigning DPL codes to those hospitals.

B. VHF Interoperability Radios

No report.

C. Rock Island County

Chief Maplethorpe reported all Rock Island County fire departments have switched their mobiles to the new dispatch frequency. One department still has some pagers that are using IFERN and RI County continues to simulcast these dispatches on the new frequency and IFERN.

D. Southwest Central Dispatch

D/C Rauter reported that Chief Leahy indicated that Southwest Central has agreed to budget necessary funds to move their station alerting system off of WHITE fireground.

E. EMnet

Chief Maplethorpe reported that approval was received from the ITTF to begin purchasing approximately EMnet terminals for some Illinois fire departments during the state's current fiscal year. The exact number of terminals approved was not known at the meeting. (Note: Mike Moos (OSFM) reported that funds were budgeted for approximately 330 EMnet terminals. He is requesting the MABAS Communications Committee's help determining which fire departments will receive terminals in the initial order.)

F. IAFC/Top Priority

D/C Rauter reported that since neither MABAS nor the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association would support his response to the IAFC's Top Priority report, that he submitted his response directly to the IAFC under his own name, without affiliation. He has not received a response from the IAFC as of yet.

A discussion was held concerning the IAFC sponsored Nextel summit in Hoffman Estates on October 3rd. It was agreed that the MABAS Communications Committee should be well represented at this meeting.

G. MABAS Dispatch Yahoo Group

Mr. Riddle reported that Chief Reardon never responded to his e-mail concerning the MABAS Dispatch Yahoo group. Mr. Riddle did prepare an advocacy statement regarding the dispatcher's Yahoo group that was distributed electronically.

D/C Rauter move to approve Advocacy Statement #XX – Dispatchers Yahoo Group with the recommendation that it be forwarded to the MABAS Executive Board for consideration. Second by B/C Mierop. All AYES; motion carried.

H. Statewide Radio License

Chief Maplethorpe reported that no guidance has been received from President Reardon to date concerning additions to the statewide radio license. He will follow-up with President Reardon on this issue.

I. Carbondale Area

No report

J. SIEC

Mr. Riddle reported that Craig Allen from ISP has advised APCO that they will not have a seat on the new Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee. No other information is available to date.

K. Chicago IFERN

Chief Maplethorpe reported that he was finally able to speak directly with someone at Chicago's Office of Emergency Management & Communications that was responsible for maintaining the IFERN base transmitters. He initially misunderstood the nature of the issue, but agreed to reprogram the IFERN base station(s) for the MABAS CTCSS tone as soon as possible. Chief Maplethorpe related hearing Chicago testing their IFERN transmitter recently.

Mr. Riddle consented to testing IFERN with Chicago from his dispatch center. (NOTE: Gregg Riddle advised that Chicago is transmitting the correct CTCSS tone at this time.)

IX. New Business

Chief Bouma related that MABAS Wisconsin is wrestling the definitions for squads and quints that has caused confusion. B/C Mierop related that NIMS has defined those units and recommended that those definitions be used.

X. Information for the Good of the Committee

IL-TERT: Mr. Riddle reported that IL-TERT has been formalized with signed intergovernmental agreements, approved by-laws and a board of officers. Mr. Doug Edmonds is coordinating the effort. ILEAS provided a \$300,000 grant to fund IL-TERT's start-up costs.

National APCO and NENA will conduct a joint meeting at Motorola in October to discuss training requirements for TERT certified dispatchers.

ITASCA IFERN TRANSMITTER: Mr. Lozar reported that Itasca's fire base station locked up in transmit on IFERN again. This was the third time. Mr. Riddle agreed to contact Itasca's Chief MacArthur to learn about the cause of the problem. (NOTE: Mr. Riddle advised that Chief MacArthur is aware of the problem and is awaiting a report from their radio maintenance vendor.)

WESCOM DIRECTOR: Chief Riddle reported that Wescom's Director will be leaving due to her husband's job relocation. A search for a new director will begin shortly.

MOBILE FAX SOLUTIONS: Chief Riddle questioned the committee about solutions for mobile fax operations. Chief Maplethorpe agreed to forward some information to Chief Riddle.

XI. Adjournment

Chief Riddle moved to adjourn the meeting. Second by Chief Bouma. All AYES; the meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

The next meeting for the MABAS Communications Committee is scheduled for **Monday, September 18, 2006** at 1000 hours. **The location of the meeting will be at Lisle-Woodridge Fire Station 1.** Please mark your calendars.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Maplethorpe

Paul Maplethorpe
Co-Chair