

Mutual Aid Box Alarm System
Special Communications Committee

ADVOCACY STATEMENT #2

Radio Licenses

1.0 PURPOSE

To encourage all MABAS members and other Fire Departments to obtain current FCC Radio Station Authorizations (licenses) for all stations and frequencies frequently used for routine or emergency radio communications.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all MABAS member agencies. It is encouraged that all fire departments and related emergency response organizations throughout Illinois adopt the procedures set forth herein.

3.0 BACKGROUND

Fire departments rely on the use of two-way radio communications for alerting personnel of emergency calls, coordinating emergency scene activities and communications with dispatch and mutual aid departments. Experience has shown that many departments are in violation of FCC regulations for various reasons including, but not limited to:

- Operating stations, both fixed and mobile, on frequencies for which they are not licensed.
- Operating stations utilizing radio licenses that have expired.
- Operating stations utilizing antenna heights or output power levels that exceed those authorized by the FCC.
- Operating base radio stations on mobile only frequencies such as the national fireground frequency of 153.830 MHz.
- Improperly using licensed fireground or mutual aid frequencies for routine call dispatch.

4.0 POLICY/PROCEDURE

The MABAS Special Communications Committee hereby makes the following recommendations for both member and non-member Fire Departments:

- 4.1 Each Fire Chief should ensure that a complete audit of radio operations and FCC Authorizations is conducted within their Department to determine that all stations and frequencies routinely utilized by their Department are properly licensed.
- 4.2 The above audit should include a review by a qualified radio service technician that all base and mobile units are operating within the technical specifications of their FCC Authorization(s).
- 4.3 Fire Departments that lack current FCC Authorizations consistent with their operations should immediately apply for proper frequency coordination and authorizations through the IMSA/IAFC frequency coordinator and FCC respectively. Information concerning licensing procedures and frequency coordinators can be found at the FCC website www.fcc.gov.
- 4.4 Fire Departments utilizing fireground or mutual aid frequencies for routine dispatch operations in violation of FCC rules should cease improper activity on those frequencies as soon as possible and revert to other appropriate and licensed frequencies or immediately apply for proper frequencies through the IMSA/IAFC frequency coordinator and the FCC.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The FCC has the authority to cease radio operations, levy monetary fines and seize radio equipment, even public safety radio equipment, which is being operated in violation of their rules. The MABAS Special Radio Committee encourages all fire departments to operate within the parameters of their FCC Radio Station Authorization(s). Departments that lack appropriate FCC Radio Station Authorizations are encouraged to coordinate and obtain proper licenses as soon as possible.

Approved by the MABAS Executive Board on 10/16/2002.