



# **Mutual Aid Box Alarm System**

## **Communications Committee**

**409 W. Nippersink Road**  
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### **Committee Report**

#### **October 18, 2006**

#### **STARCOM21**

- The majority of the infrastructure for the Starcom21 radio network has been installed and is operational. Several members of the MABAS Communications Committee and USAR Communications Specialists have been using the network over the past several months to test the system. The network has been working remarkably well. The system should remain open for unlimited use and testing through the end of 2006. After that, most radios will be restricted to monthly tests and approved training exercises.
- MABAS has received approval for five additional talkgroups on the Starcom21 network. These talkgroups will have restricted distribution and will be used for USAR, MABAS Haz-Mat and TRT responses, IMAT and spare talkgroups.
- The USAR team used Starcom21 with reasonable success during two August deployment exercises in the Springfield and East St. Louis areas.
- Operational guidelines/procedures for the Starcom21 system along with a training program will be available in the near future.

#### **Statewide Radio License**

- Statewide License - No action has been taken to date to update the MABAS statewide radio license until funding for frequency coordination is secured. The Communications Committee desires to expand this license to cover MERCI 280, MERCI 340 and several other low band, VHF, UHF and 800 MHz interoperability frequencies.
- Radio Licensing – Radio licensing assistance continues to be a very active service provided by the Communications Committee, free of charge, to MABAS members. Fire Departments that do not have current FCC radio authorizations, or have outdated authorizations, are welcome to contact Chief Maplethorpe at [chief@rlfire.org](mailto:chief@rlfire.org) or by calling 847-815-2600. Frequency coordination fees by an FCC authorized frequency coordinator will apply to most frequency requests.

## **EMnet**

- Mike Moos from OSFM requested assistance from Communications Committee Co-Chairs Dave Dato and Paul Maplethorpe to prioritize the distribution of EMnet terminals to Illinois fire departments. Mr. Moos expects approximately 340 terminals to be installed before the summer of 2007. All fire departments in Illinois will be offered an EMnet terminal over the next few budget years.
- Departments were placed into three categories for distribution. Departments actively involved in USAR, Regional Haz-Mat and Technical Rescue teams were priority 1 along with population centers, departments with nuclear power plants or other major utility resources. Priority 2 departments include many of the larger fire departments throughout the state. Priority 1 & 2 departments should receive terminals over the next nine (9) months.
- Guidelines for the use of the EMnet system for the fire service will be forthcoming.

## **IFERN Usage**

- As additional MABAS Divisions become operational, the IFERN frequency is seeing more activity on a daily basis. To assist with frequency management, MABAS has adopted several communications and procedural based Advocacy Statements and Recommended Practices. As a result of these adopted statements and practices, the following radio traffic should not be broadcast over IFERN or the colored fireground channels:
  - Communications between the ground and medical or other helicopters.
  - Severe weather messages.
  - Hospital by-pass messages.
  - Equipment in/out of service messages.

MABAS Divisions are encouraged to follow the established guidelines and police themselves with regards to offending departments.

## **Advocacy Statements/Recommended Practices**

- Emergency/Evacuation Signaling - Recommended Practice #4 Guideline for Providing Audible Emergency Warning at Emergency Incident Scenes to address incident scene Emergency/Evacuation Signaling has been approved by the Communications Committee and has been submitted to the MABAS Executive Board for consideration.

- MABAS Dispatch Yahoo – Advocacy Statement #11 *Guidelines for the Use of the MABAS Telecommunicator List Serve* is designed to control a Yahoo internet group that will provide MABAS dispatch and command personnel with a forum to discuss the various aspects of dispatching a MABAS incident. Advocacy Statement #11 has also been approved by the Communications Committee and has been submitted to the MABAS Executive Board for consideration.
- Interdivisional Box Alarms – This proposed advocacy statement remains in draft form but should be ready for consideration at the January 2007 MABAS Executive Board meeting.

### **Training Opportunities**

- MABAS Communications has several classes aimed at assisting new MABAS Divisions to become operational. These courses include fire service personnel as well as fire department and MABAS Division dispatchers. These courses have been taught in Tazwell, Rock Island, Henry and Milwaukee counties and were well received. A version of this course was also developed for established MABAS Divisions that are switching dispatch centers. Please contact Communications Committee Co-Chair Paul Maplethorpe [chief@rlfire.org](mailto:chief@rlfire.org) if you are interested in a course or would like more information.

Respectfully submitted,

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