



Subject:	Emergency Management Network (EMnet) Secure Messaging System
Functional Area:	Communications
Category:	Policy
Approved By:	MABAS Executive Board

Purpose:

To orient all MABAS members and MABAS Dispatch Centers to the Emergency Management Network (EMnet) text and messaging communications capability. This network will be essential for exchanging secure messages during times of serious emergencies or disasters.

To provide operational and technical information for setup, use, and vigilant monitoring of messages in the system.

To provide examples of how and when the system should be used.

Responsibility:

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

Accountability:

EMnet is a project of the Illinois Terrorism Task Force, and as such, ultimate operation and enforcement of system policies rests therein. Enforcement of this specific policy as it relates to MABAS rests initially with the Co-Chairs of the MABAS Telecommunications, Communications, and Dispatch Centers committee, then the MABAS CEO, followed by the MABAS President, 1st Vice President and 2nd Vice President.

Reporting Requirement:

There is no routine reporting requirement for this policy.

Background:

Fire departments rely heavily on two-way radios to communicate between companies, departments, and other disciplines at emergency and disaster scenes. Phone lines, cellular phones, and email are also used. Newer technologies include the use of secure satellite and internet methods to exchange text messages and attached files between dispatch centers and fire agencies.

This advanced messaging capability can be extended to on-site command posts, Unified Command Centers, and specialty team operations centers when deployed.

The Illinois Terrorism Task Force is prepared to provide Comlabs EMnet systems to all fire agencies and dispatch centers throughout the state.

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Policy:

The MABAS Telecommunications, Communications and Dispatch Committee hereby establishes the following policy:

1. Intended Uses

The following is a list of intended uses for the EMnet system:

- Statewide deployment orders
- Suggested training topics related to MABAS
- Meeting announcements
- Test dates and locations for OSFM
- Specialty team messages, support during deployments, accountability and current team status
- Weather alerting and EAS messaging
- Transmission of mission assignments / deployment orders from the State EOC to Specialty Teams and Resources via established protocols.
- Specialty status reports using pre-formatted electronic forms
- Paging/alerting of specialty teams, IMT, MAST, HAZMAT, TRT, etc via message forwarding from EMnet to text-enabled devices (including pagers, cell phones & Nextel) and email accounts
- Division-to-Division and/or MABAS-to-Division(s) messaging. This may include emergency and informational messaging from IEMA to MABAS
- DHS alert color changes and “just-in-time” reminders for action or considerations when moving to a different color alert
- IDPH alert messages, outbreaks, emergency and non-emergency messaging
- POD hospital status, messages relating to Mass Casualty Incidents, or patient distribution
- Chicago Transit Alerting Network (CTAN) for train and bus transportation alert messages in Northeast Illinois Metro Area.
- Other transportation alert messages such as significant road closures.

2. Technical Parameters

Basic technical parameters of the EMnet terminal (may be slightly different from site-to-site):

- Outside satellite dish and mount appropriate for the site (provided by grant).
- Computer with satellite interface card, flat-panel monitor, keyboard, mouse, speakers (provided by grant).
- Installation of hardware by a Comlabs-arranged contractor based on data provided in a site survey completed by the host agency (provided by grant).
- Land-based internet connection needed such as DSL, broadband on cable, dial-up service or wireless internet service. Note: Dial-up service is NOT recommended. Appropriate cable (Cat 5 or better) from hub/switch/router to computer prior to or at installation (provided by fire agency or MABAS dispatch agency).
- Redundant internet connections are suggested, especially for dispatch agencies and specialty team operations.
- System should be attached to a reliable power source such as UPS with generator backup.

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3. Staffing Requirement

Dispatch Agencies:

- For dispatch agencies: 24 x 7 x 365 vigilant monitoring and responsiveness to messages.
- If in a MABAS Division Dispatch Center, the computer must be available to fire telecommunicators.

Fire Agencies:

- For fire agencies who are not staffed 24 x 7 x 365, it is recommended that they enable the message-forwarding feature to text page key personnel so that they can remotely receive urgent messages
- For fire agencies who are staffed, the computer speakers may be enabled to alert in-house personnel of urgent messages. They may also forward all urgent messages to key individuals via text-paging device.

4. Message Format

- 4.1 Any EMnet message created by or for any Fire service agency or special team are to include in the body of the message:
 1. A "TO:" line indicating the intended recipient either by title or name and,
 2. A "signature block" including the name and agency of the originator of the message.
- 4.2 Inbound messages may contain important text in the body of the message, and may contain attachments such as PDF, WORD, EXCEL, or other common file types. When attachments are provided, the attachments cannot be forwarded to paging devices, so the main text message must describe, in basic terms, the contents of the attachment.
- 4.3 Outbound messages may contain attachments.
- 4.4 All messages should have the "Request Receipts" box checked to create a log of when the message was sent, the intended recipients, when it arrived at each destination terminal, and when it was read (acknowledged) by the operator at the receiving station.

5. Message Groups

Message groups will be constructed such as all MABAS dispatch centers, or all fire agencies in a given MABAS division, etc.

6. Group Structure

In order to maintain a hierarchical messaging structure that follows the current structure of MABAS the following messaging relationships will be maintained.

- 6.1 IEMA & OSFM will be the only agencies that can address all fire agencies as one group.
- 6.2 MABAS HQ will be able to initiate a message to and receive a message from:
 - RED Center and
 - Orland Central
- 6.3 RED Center & Orland Central will be able to initiate a message to and receive a message from:
 - MABAS HQ
 - MABAS Division Dispatch Centers
 - IEMA
- 6.4 MABAS Division Dispatch Centers will be able to initiate a message to and receive a message from:
 - IEMA
 - RED Center and Orland Central
 - All Other MABAS Division Dispatch Centers

- Member Agencies within their Division (primary and secondary)
 - PSAPs within their Division
 - POD Hospitals
 - County EMA Agencies
- 6.5 MABAS member agencies will be able to initiate a message to and receive a message from:
- Their Division Dispatch Centers
 - Member agencies within their Division (primary and secondary)
 - County EMA Agency

7. Message Priority Levels

7.1 Message priority assignment capabilities within the EMnet system are shown in the table below.

- 7.1.1 All messages initiated by a local agency will be Priority 1.
- 7.1.2 Messages initiated by OSFM, RED, Orland or Divisional Dispatch Centers may be Priority 2 or 1.
- 7.1.3 Messages initiated by IEMA or the JOC may be Priority 3, 2 or 1.

7.2 Message Priority Table

MESSAGE PRIORITY	AUTHORIZED ORIGINATORS	LEVEL OF URGENCY
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal • Private • County • State • Federal Regional • Federal Nationwide 	Routine / Administrative
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County • State • Federal Regional • Federal Nationwide 	Urgent
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State • Federal Regional • Federal Nationwide 	Emergency
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Regional • Federal Nationwide 	Major Disaster
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Nationwide 	National Security Emergency
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential 	National Security Emergency

Note: MABAS Division Dispatch Centers will have Message Priority 2 access.

8. Training

The system vendor and the Project Coordinator will provide basic and refresher training on the use of the EMnet system. (See Appendix 1)

9. Acronyms

CTAN	Chicago Transit Alerting Network
DHS	US Department of Homeland Security
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EMnet	Emergency Management Network
EOC	Emergency Operating Center
HazMat	Hazardous Materials Response Team
IEMA	Illinois Emergency Management Agency
IMT	Incident Management Team
ITTF	Illinois Terrorism Task Force
JOC	Joint Operations Center
MABAS	Mutual Aid Box Alarm System
MAST	Management Assistance Support Team
OSFM	Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point (9-1-1 Center)
POD	A coordinating hospital within an EMS region
TRT	Technical Rescue Team

10. Conclusion

The EMnet tool is a powerful, secure method to send sensitive, complex, or sensitive information relating to disaster management, Homeland Security or non-emergency important information.

All agencies and MABAS Division dispatch centers should become familiar with EMnet and use it appropriately.

Approved by the MABAS Executive Board on July 19, 2007.

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APPENDIX 1

Vendor Contact:

Comlabs is the vendor providing this product, see: www.COMLABS.com

EMnet Customer Support
Customer Support Engineer
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Phone: (321) 409-9898 ext. 301

Logistics Administrator (Installation and site survey contact)
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Melbourne, FL 32904
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Local Support for the Illinois Grant:

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