

**Mutual Aid Box Alarm System – Illinois  
Starcom21 for Interoperability**

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Subject:	Starcom21 Interoperability
Functional Area:	Communications
Category:	Policy
Approved :	MABAS Executive Board

**Purpose:**

To orient all MABAS members and MABAS Dispatch Centers to the State of Illinois STARCOM21 statewide trunked radio system.

To provide operational and technical information for setup, use, and monitoring of messages on the STARCOM21 radio system.

To provide examples of how and when STARCOM21 should be used.

**Responsibility:**

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

**Accountability:**

Radio interoperability is the responsibility of every fire department in Illinois and therefore, compliance with this policy ultimately rests with each Fire Chief. 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, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President. Enforcement of operations, policies and procedures on the Starcom21 radio network also rests with Motorola, Inc, the network owner/operator, and the Illinois Terrorism Taskforce.

**Reporting Requirement:**

There is no routine reporting requirement for this policy.

**Background:**

STARCOM21 is a Motorola-owned, Trunked Radio System, which has a business relationship with the State of Illinois. State agencies and some county and municipal public safety agencies have user agreements with Motorola/STARCOM21. Users of the system for daily dispatch have various types of contract agreements with Motorola under the state contract. The Illinois Terrorism Taskforce (ITTF) provided grants that included delivery of STARCOM21 radios to all fire, police, emergency management, public health agencies as well as other entities. Other entities include Public Safety Answering Points (9-1-1/dispatch centers), special response teams and others.

The occasional use of the system (defined herein) does not obligate agencies to a user contract nor will they experience routine billing for such use. The radios issued under the ITTF grant include: portable radios, fixed base-stations, installed mobile radios, transportable mobile radios in carrying cases. Configurations were based on user needs and capabilities at the time of the grant.

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**Policy:**

The MABAS Communications Committee hereby makes the following recommendations for both member and non-member first responders:

1.1 Intended Uses: The following is a list of uses for the STARCOM21 radio system:

- Statewide deployment coordination
- Pre-approved drills or exercises
- Pre-approved special events
- Testing of radios
- Specialty team communications, support during deployments, accountability, and team status reports
- Division-to-Division and/or MABAS-to-Division(s) messaging relating to major deployments. This may include emergency and informational messaging from IEMA to MABAS. STARCOM21 does not take the place of IFERN, EMnet, or phonelines.
- Necessary and urgent messaging with Public Health agencies.

1.2 Vendor contact:

Motorola is the vendor providing the system radio equipment.

See: Appendix 1

1.3 Basic technical parameters of the STARCOM21 radio:

- 1.3.1 The installation and deployment of STARCOM21 radios may vary from site-to-site or agency-to-agency.
- 1.3.2 All STARCOM21 radios, whether base, mobile, or portable shall maintain certain basic talk groups and channels per MABAS guidelines. Users should not cause to have MABAS talk groups eliminated from the radio.
- 1.3.3 “Base stations” may be Consolette or may be a mobile radio attached to a 100VAC-to-12VDC power supply. Local users may or may not interface the base radio to a dispatch console. This would be done at the agency’s cost in most cases. These radios should be installed with a fixed, outdoor, base station antenna.
- 1.3.4 “Mobiles” may be affixed to a command vehicle, chief’s car, or specialty response vehicle. This would be a Motorola XTL5000 or equivalent with a fixed mobile antenna.
- 1.3.5 “Transportable” radios are typically mobile radios that are placed in weather resistant carry-cases and deployed with mobile antenna with a magnetic base, a length of coaxial cable for the antenna, and a method to attach the radio to a vehicle such as a cigarette lighter plug. This would be a Motorola XTL5000 or equivalent.
- 1.3.6 “Portable” radios are typically issued to specialty teams or individuals with specific assignments within MABAS. This would be a Motorola XTS5000 or equivalent.
- 1.3.7 Other custom installations may be required within the MABAS purview such as specialty teams, special mobiles owned by MABAS, or for special events.

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- 1.4 Staffing requirement – dispatch agencies:
  - 1.4.1 For dispatch agencies: 24 x 7 x 365 vigilant monitoring and responsiveness to messages on the “MABAS Statewide Talk Group” is to be reinforced.
  - 1.4.2 If the “base” radio is installed at a MABAS Division dispatch center, the control of the radio must be available to Fire Telecommunicators
  - 1.4.3 For major deployments, RED Center (or Orland as Secondary) will give notice on the use of the STARCOM21 radio, Talk Group assignment, and expectations of use. This will be done as part of the deployment message. These messages will be sent via FAX, EM-net terminal, or other authorized means.
  
- 1.5 Requirements for Fire Agencies with STARCOM21 Mobiles and Portables:
  - 1.5.1 Refer to the companion document for radio signatures within MABAS (C-01-05.05 *Communications – Radio Signatures for MABAS-IL*). Responding units shall use the radio signature format contained in that document.
  - 1.5.2 MABAS deployed units shall use the TO-FROM format. For example:
    - “RED Center FROM EMS Taskforce 19”
    - “MABAS Division 15 FROM MABAS 201”
    - “TRT Strike Team 16 FROM RED Center”
  
- 1.6 Training:
  - 1.6.1 Periodic testing of the STARCOM21 radios is encouraged.
  - 1.6.2 Extended use for a specific drill or training session shall be coordinated through the MABAS-IL office.
  - 1.6.3 Personnel who are expected to operate STARCOM21 radios must have been given and orientation on this Policy and C-01-05.05 *Communications – Radio Signatures for MABAS-IL*.

**Conclusion:**

The STARCOM21 radio system is a wide-area method to send and receive voice messages relating to large incidents, disaster management, Homeland Security or critical information for MABAS deployments.

All agencies and MABAS Division dispatch centers must become familiar with STARCOM21 and use it appropriately.

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**APPENDIX A**

Starcom21 Contact Information