

# Mutual Aid Box Alarm System – Illinois Communications – Starcom21 Interoperability

Index #: C-01-01-05

Adopted: 10/22/2008

Revised: 2/24/2022

Page 1 of 4

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



## PURPOSE

To provide operational and technical information for setup, use, and monitoring of messages on the State of Illinois 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 Communications committee, then the MABAS CEO, followed by the MABAS President, 1st Vice President and 2nd Vice President. Enforcement of operations, policies and procedures on the Starcom21 radio network also rests with Motorola, Inc, the network owner/operator, the STARCOM21 Oversight/Advisory Sub-Committee, Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC), and the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC).

## REPORTING REQUIREMENT

There is no routine reporting requirement for this guideline.

## BACKGROUND

STARCOM21 is a Motorola-owned, Trunked Radio System, which has contract with the State of Illinois. State, 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.

# Mutual Aid Box Alarm System – Illinois Communications – Starcom21 Interoperability

Index #: C-01-01-05

Adopted: 10/22/2008

Revised: 2/24/2022

Page 2 of 4

## POLICY

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

1. Intended Uses. The following is a list of uses for the STARCOM21 radio system:
  - Statewide deployment coordination
  - Interdisciplinary Mutual Aid
  - Change of Quarters
  - 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 or phonelines.
  - Necessary and urgent messaging with Public Health agencies.
2. Basic technical parameters of the STARCOM21 radio.
  - 2.1. The installation and deployment of STARCOM21 radios may vary from site-to-site or agency-to-agency.
  - 2.2. All STARCOM21 radios, whether base, mobile, or portable shall maintain certain basic talk groups and channels per SIEC and MABAS guidelines. Users should not delete MABAS talk groups from the radio.
  - 2.3. “Base stations” are radios or other technology used from a building or fixed location. Local users may or may not interface to a dispatch console. This would be done at the agency’s cost in most cases. Base radios should be installed with a fixed, outdoor, base station antenna.
  - 2.4. “Mobiles” may be affixed to a command vehicle, chief’s car, or specialty response vehicle.
  - 2.5. “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.
  - 2.6. “Portable” radios are typically issued to specialty teams or individuals with specific assignments within MABAS.
  - 2.7. Other custom installations may be required within the MABAS purview such as specialty teams, special mobiles owned by MABAS, or for special events.
3. Staffing requirement – dispatch agencies.
  - 3.1 For dispatch agencies: 24 x 7 x 365 vigilant monitoring and responsiveness to messages on the IL-CALL statewide calling talkgroup with capability to switch to and monitor the “MABAS Statewide Talk Group” is to be reinforced.
  - 3.2 If the “base” radio is installed at a MABAS Division dispatch center, the control of the radio must be available to Fire Telecommunicators.
  - 3.3 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 email or other authorized means.

## Mutual Aid Box Alarm System – Illinois Communications – Starcom21 Interoperability

Index #: C-01-01-05

Adopted: 10/22/2008

Revised: 2/24/2022

Page 3 of 4

4. Requirements for Fire Agencies with STARCOM21 Mobiles and Portables.
- 4.1 All fire service agencies and communications centers should include interoperability and fire service specific talkgroups included in the Illinois Statewide Interoperability Template (SWIT), included as an addendum to this document.  
For additional information regarding the SWIT, please consult:  
<https://www2.illinois.gov/iema/LocalEMA/Pages/Interoperable-Communications.aspx>
- 4.2 The following MABAS talkgroups should be programmed into all fire department issued/operated STARCOM21 radios:

Talkgroup Name	Talkgroup ID/CKR	Function
MABAS	767A	Statewide Calling & Coordination
MABAS SEC	12DF/1501	Secure Statewide Calling & Coordination
MABAS OPS1	12DE	Statewide Incident Coordination
MABAS OPS2	12E7	Secure Statewide Incident Coordination
MABAS OPS3E	12E4/1501	Statewide Incident Coordination
MABAS OPS4E	12E8/1501	Secure Statewide Incident Coordination
MABAS OPS5E	12E9/1501	Statewide Incident Coordination
IL-HZMT	12DB	Statewide Haz-Mat Incident Coordination
IL-HZMT SEC	12E1/1501	Secure Haz-Mat Incident Coordination
IL-TRT	12DC	Statewide Technical Rescue Coordination

- 4.3 In addition to the talkgroups listed in 4.2, the following MABAS talkgroups should be programmed into MABAS-IL owned/provided staff, USAR and cache radios:

Talkgroup Name	Talkgroup ID/CKR	Function
USAR	12DD	IL-TF1 Response & Coordination
USAR Secure	12E3/1502	Secure IL-TF1 Response & Coordination

- 4.4 In addition to the talkgroups listed in 4.2 and 4.3, the following MABAS talkgroups should be programmed into MABAS-IL owned/provided elected board, CEO, Operations Chief, Deputy Operations Chief and Finance Branch Chief radios:

Talkgroup Name	Talkgroup ID/CKR	Function
ADMIN	12DA	MABAS Leadership Coordination
ADMIN Secure 1	12E0/1503	Secure MABAS Leadership Coordination

# Mutual Aid Box Alarm System – Illinois Communications – Starcom21 Interoperability

Index #: C-01-01-05

Adopted: 10/22/2008

Revised: 2/24/2022

Page 4 of 4

- 4.5 In addition to the talkgroups listed in 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, the following MABAS talkgroups should be programmed into MABAS-IL owned/provided elected board and CEO radios:

Talkgroup Name	Talkgroup ID/CKR	Function
ADMIN Secure 2	12E6/1504	Secure MABAS Leadership Coordination

- 4.6 Refer to the companion document for radio signatures within MABAS (C-01-05-05 MABAS-IL Radio Signatures). Responding units shall use the radio signature format contained in that document.

- 4.7 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”*

## 5. Training

- 5.1 Periodic testing of the STARCOM21 radios is encouraged.
- 5.2 Extended use for a specific drill or training session shall be coordinated through the MABAS-IL office.
- 5.3 Personnel who are expected to operate STARCOM21 radios must have been given and orientation on this policy and C-01-05-05 MABAS-IL Radio Signatures.

## 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.

*(Approved by the MABAS Executive Board on 10/22/2008. Revised by the MABAS Executive Board on 02/24/2022.)*