

Mutual Aid Box Alarm System – Illinois Communications – Statewide Radio License

Index #: C-01-02-01

Adopted: 2/5/2004

Revised: 2/24/2022

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Subject: Statewide Radio License
Functional Area: Communications
Category: Policy
Approved By: MABAS Executive Board



PURPOSE

To permit the sharing of the MABAS statewide radio authorization, WQAG579, for the IFERN and IFERN2 dispatch frequencies and the Red, White, Blue, Gold, Black & Gray fireground frequencies with MABAS member departments operating under the signed MABAS agreement and their affiliated emergency response entities. To ensure that member Fire Departments are properly licensed for dispatch and operations channels used locally.

RESPONSIBILITY

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.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Enforcement of this specific policy 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. Ultimately, however, ultimate authority regarding the enforcement of radio operations and licensing rests with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

REPORTING REQUIREMENT

There is no routine reporting requirement for this policy.

BACKGROUND

The Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), an intergovernmental agency, has been granted an authorization by the Federal Communications Commission to operate mobile and temporary fixed base stations throughout the State of Illinois on the eight (8) "MABAS" frequencies. This authorization was obtained to ensure fire service interoperability throughout Illinois at emergency incidents and disaster scenes.

Radio licensing is the responsibility of every fire department in Illinois and therefore, compliance with this guideline ultimately rests with each Fire Chief. Enforcement of radio rules is the responsibility of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Enforcement of this specific guideline 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.

POLICY

MABAS Statewide Radio License

The MABAS Communications Committee hereby establishes the following policy.

In accordance with Part 90, Subpart H, Section 179 of the Federal Communications Commission's rules and regulations, Shared Use of Radio Stations, the MABAS Executive Board hereby authorizes the shared use by member MABAS departments and their affiliated emergency

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response organizations, that qualify for public safety licensure, frequencies authorized by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on call sign WQAG579 provided that all of the following conditions are met:

1. The use of the identified MABAS frequencies will be restricted to emergency scene communications and official training activities. Use of the frequencies for non-emergency activities is prohibited.
2. Member departments using the MABAS authorization agree to abide by all applicable FCC rules and regulations.
3. Member departments using the MABAS authorization agree to abide by all relevant MABAS Communications Policies, Procedures and Guidelines Statements.
4. Member departments using the MABAS authorization agree to limit transmit power to a maximum of ten (10) watts on the Red, White, Blue, Gold, Black & Gray fireground frequencies.
5. Programming transmit capabilities on RED, WHITE, BLUE, GOLD, BLACK or GRAY Fireground frequencies from any fixed locations, including mobile radios with exterior antennas, is strictly forbidden.

Local FCC Radio Authorizations

1. 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
2. Chiefs 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.
3. The authorization 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. Fire Departments that lack current FCC Authorizations consistent with their operations should immediately apply for proper frequency coordination and authorizations through an authorized frequency coordinator and FCC respectively. Information concerning licensing procedures and frequency coordinators can be found at the FCC website www.fcc.gov.
5. 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 an authorized frequency coordinator and the FCC.

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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. Neither the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System nor the MABAS Executive Board will accept responsibility for operations by member or non-member entities on the eight (8) MABAS frequencies that are in conflict with FCC rules or are in conflict with this advocacy statement, MABAS rules and regulations or any other local, state or federal law. Any sanctions imposed by the Federal Communications Commission, including fines, costs and attorney's fees incurred by MABAS due to a member or non-member entity's improper use of the MABAS frequencies shall be the responsibility of the offending party.

(Approved by the MABAS Executive Board on February 5, 2004 | Effective: May 26, 2004. Revised by the MABAS Executive Board on February 24, 2022.)