

Welcome to the
2026
**MABAS-Illinois Command &
Communications Training
Summit**

February 16 – February 20, 2026

22nd Annual Summit
2004 – 2026

Marriott Hotel & Conference Center
Bloomington-Normal, Illinois

Current as of January 9, 2026

MABAS-ILLINOIS COMMAND TRAINING SUMMIT
February 16 – February 18, 2026

Monday	February 16, 2026
0730 – 0830	Breakfast for Committee and Staff Members – Redbird Lobby Vendor Sponsor
0700 – 1700	Registration – North End Redbird Lobby
0830 – 0900	Committee Orientation & 2026 Briefings – Redbird C/D
0900 – 1230	Committee Work Sessions
By-Laws Committee – North Executive	Water Rescue Committee – Redbird E
Logistics Committee – Fell A	Communications Committee – Redbird F
Fire Intelligence Liaisons – Hunt	UAS Committee – Redbird G
TRT Committee – Fell B	HAZMAT Committee – Broadway
1145 – 1230	Working Committee Lunches – Redbird Lobby
1300 – 1330	<p>Welcome & Dignitary Comments – Redbird C/D</p> <p><i>Bernie Lyons</i>, MABAS-ILLINOIS CEO</p> <p><i>Don Davids</i>, MABAS-Illinois President</p> <p>Presentation of Colors; Pledge of Allegiance; Dignitary Comments</p>
1330 – 1430	<p>Disaster Wargaming – How Gaming is Revolutionizing Education, Training, and Exercises – Redbird C/D – <i>Dr. Arthur Simental</i></p> <p>Examine how disaster wargaming is being used as a formal exercise method to improve decision-making, consequence analysis, and preparedness. The session focuses on practical applications that allow agencies to test assumptions, explore second- and third-order effects, and strengthen training outcomes beyond traditional exercises.</p>
1445 – 1540	<p>Breakout Sessions Round #1</p> <p>#1 – Redbird C/D – Game Presentation – <i>Dr. Arthur Simental</i></p> <p>Participants will work through an advanced tabletop disaster wargame built around realistic scenarios in McLean County, Illinois. This two-hour session demonstrates how wargaming can surface operational gaps, decision pressures, and coordination challenges before they appear in real incidents.</p> <p>#2 – Fell A – Policies Gaps – Real Consequences – From Minor Oversights to Major Headlines – <i>Jon Dorman</i></p> <p>Operational readiness is critical, but administrative policy failures can create equal or greater organizational risk. This session uses real-world case examples to show how gaps in eligibility standards, discipline, and retaliation safeguards have led to costly consequences. Attendees will identify warning signs and policy areas that require command-level attention.</p> <p>#3 – Fell B - Effectiveness & Future of Special Teams – <i>Chief Steve Malone & Chief David Piper</i></p> <p>Reviews the operational and financial realities of special teams, including true cost, response models, and box card effectiveness. The session challenges command staff to evaluate special teams through a risk-based lens rather than</p>

	<p>tradition. Emphasis is placed on sustainability and future planning at both the department and MABAS Division levels.</p> <p>#4 – Redbird E – Firemen’s Disciplinary Act – <i>Chief Joseph Mitchell</i></p> <p>Provides a practical command-level review of the Firemen’s Disciplinary Act and its application during investigations and discipline. The session focuses on avoiding common missteps that lead to grievances, liability, and erosion of trust. When applied correctly, the Act supports consistency, accountability, and organizational stability.</p> <p>#5 – Redbird F – Find Me the Money – <i>Chief Jeff Bryant</i></p> <p>Draws on decades of experience securing more than \$20 million in grants and funding. This session walks through local, state, and federal funding opportunities and outlines practical steps departments can take to improve their chances of success. Attendees will leave with a clearer path toward funding equipment and operational needs.</p> <p>#6 – Redbird G – From the Dashboard to the Fireground – Making Technology Work for the Fire Service – <i>Chief Paul Polep</i></p> <p>Explores how technology can either enhance or hinder fire service operations depending on how it is governed and implemented. The session examines common integration challenges, leadership decision points, and accountability issues tied to software adoption. Emphasis is placed on maintaining command clarity and operational value.</p>
1540 – 1550	Breakout Session Rotation
1550 – 1645	<p>Breakout Session Round #2</p> <p>#1 – Redbird C/D – Game Presentation – <i>Dr. Arthur Simental</i></p> <p>#2 – Fell A – Policies Gaps – Real Consequences – From Minor Oversights to Major Headlines – <i>Jon Dorman</i></p> <p>#3 – Fell B - Effectiveness & Future of Special Teams – <i>Chief Steve Malone & Chief David Piper</i></p> <p>#4 – Redbird E – Firemen’s Disciplinary Act – <i>Chief Joseph Mitchell</i></p> <p>#5 – Redbird F – Find Me the Money – <i>Chief Jeff Bryant</i></p> <p>#6 – Redbird G – From the Dashboard to the Fireground – Making Technology Work for the Fire Service – <i>Chief Paul Polep</i></p>
1645 – 1700	Administrative Announcements & Day’s Summary – Redbird C/D
1800 – 2030	Tired Travelers & Dinner with our Vendors – Redbird A/B/C/D – Sponsored by AT&T and FirstNet

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Tuesday	February 17, 2026
0700 – 0800	Breakfast for Summit Attendees & Vendors – Redbird Lobby - Sponsor
0700 – 1600	Registration – North End Redbird Lobby
0800 – 0805	Welcome and Administrative Announcements - Redbird C/D
0805 – 0855	We Want You to Be the Chief, Chief! – Redbird C/D – <i>Chief Richard Mikel</i> Reviews an unusual leadership assignment in which a Fire Chief served as Acting Chief of Police for eleven months. The session examines organizational reaction, cross-discipline leadership challenges, and critical incidents involving joint responses. Lessons focus on adaptability, credibility, and command presence outside traditional roles.
0855 – 0910	Break with Vendors – Redbird A/B
0910 – 1000	Community Risk Reduction & NERIS Update – Redbird C/D – <i>J.C. Fultz, OSFM</i> Examines the evolving role of Community Risk Reduction in Illinois, including where progress is being made and what may come next. The session also provides an update on the transition to NERIS, highlighting key changes from legacy reporting systems and what departments should expect moving forward.
1000 – 1015	Break with Vendors – Redbird A/B
1000 – 1200	IESMA Board Meeting – Fell A
1015 – 1215	KEYNOTE: What is Real Risk Management All About? - Redbird C/D – <i>Gordon Graham</i> The phrase “risk management” gets thrown around a lot. But what is real risk management? It is more than the safety stuff; it is more than the insurance stuff; and it is more than the ergonomics stuff. Everything you do in your organization involves a level of risk. In this two-hour session, Gordon will explain how to recognize the real risks you face. He will then teach you how to prioritize these risks. Finally, he will show you how to mobilize (act) to do something about the real risks you face in your organization. At the end of two hours, you’ll understand how to better mitigate the real risks you face in your organization and make real change.
1215 – 1315	Lunch with Vendors – Redbird C/D
1230 – 1300	HSAC Fire Mutual Aid Committee Meeting – Blackburn
1300 – 1400	MABAS INTERSTATE Meeting – Broadway
1315 – 1415	Using Technology to Improve Readiness Part 1 – Redbird C/D – <i>Dr. Brad Miller and Charlie Ferriera</i> Provides a strategic overview of how departments can use technology to support readiness, including compliance tracking, skills assessment, and data-driven training decisions. The focus is on aligning tools with operational needs rather than adopting technology for its own sake.

1415 – 1445	Break with Vendors – Redbird A/B
1445 – 1545	<p>Using Technology to Improve Readiness Part 2 – Redbird C/D – <i>Dr. Brad Miller and Charlie Ferriera</i></p> <p>A hands-on readiness war game using a scenario at Illinois State University. Participants will see how simulated environments can expose training gaps and readiness issues before they become operational problems.</p>
1545 – 1600	Break with Vendors – Redbird A/B
1600 – 1700	Executive Board Meeting - Redbird C/D
1700 – 1800	<p>Happy Hour - Redbird A/B/C/D – <i>Sponsored by Stryker</i></p> <p>Command Door Prizes (Raffle & 50/50 winner need not be present)</p>

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Wednesday	February 18, 2026
0700 – 0800	Breakfast for Summit Attendees – Redbird Lobby Vendor Sponsor
0800 – 0845	The Future of MABAS – Redbird C/D – <i>MABAS Elected Board & CEO</i> An open forum focused on the future direction of MABAS and the challenges ahead. Discussion will address system expectations, operational demands, and opportunities for improvement. <i>What must MABAS preserve—and what must it adapt—to remain effective in the years ahead?</i>
0845 – 0945	Rules of Engagement – Redbird C/D – Deputy Chief <i>Todd Friddle</i> Reviews how escalated incidents are managed within and across MABAS Divisions, from interdivisional requests to statewide response. The session focuses on the roles of Division leadership, Special Operations Teams, and responding companies, and the processes that differ from day-to-day operations. Emphasis is placed on maintaining operational efficiency, clarity, and readiness during deployment.
0945 – 1000	Break with Vendors – Redbird A/B
1000 – 1200	Joint Session with Dispatchers – Redbird C/D – Standard Response Protocol and Standard Reunification Method: An Overview for Fire Service Personnel – <i>J.P. Moore and Kim Lohse</i> Provides fire service personnel with an overview of the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) and Standard Reunification Method (SRM). The session explains how these frameworks support coordinated safe responses during school and community emergencies and the fire service's role in their implementation.
1200 – 1215	Closing Comments and Wrap Up

MABAS-ILLINOIS COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING SUMMIT
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Wednesday	February 18, 2026
0800 – 1600	Registration – North End Redbird Lobby
1000 – 1200	<p>Joint Session with Dispatchers – Redbird C/D – Standard Response Protocol and Standard Reunification Method: An Overview for Fire Service Personnel – J.P. Moore and Dr. Kim Lohse</p> <p>This session breaks down what SRP and SRM are and why they matter during school and community emergencies. You'll learn how these common frameworks help first responders, schools, and the public stay coordinated and reduce confusion during high-stress events.</p>
1200 – 1300	Lunch on your own!
1300 – 1330	Opening Introductions and Ice Breaker – Redbird C/D
1330 – 1430	Meet Your OP's Branch Chief – Redbird C/D
1430 – 1445	Break with Vendors – Redbird A/B
1445 – 1545	<p>Telecommunicators and CPR – Redbird C/D – Sgt Zach Oltmanns</p> <p>Listen to real 911 calls involving dispatcher-assisted CPR and see how early intervention can change outcomes. We'll talk through practical ways to start T-CPR faster and more effectively, along with a brief update on Senate Bill 1295 and new requirements for telecommunicators.</p>
1545 – 1645	<p>Lesson Learned – Redbird C/D – Chris Lienhardt, Des Breese, Jake Cranston, and Jim Klinefelter</p> <p>A review of three MABAS-activated incidents from Divisions 6, 17, and 29. The discussion focuses on what worked, what didn't, and what dispatch and communications centers can take away from real events.</p>
1645 – 1700	Communications Door Prizes – Raffle – 50/50 Drawing (Raffle & 50/50 winner need not be present)
1800 – 2030	Tired Travelers & Dinner with our Vendors – Pirates – Redbird A/B/C/D

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Thursday	February 19, 2026
0700 – 0800	Breakfast for Attendees & Vendors – Redbird Lobby – Vendor Sponsor
0800 – 0900	<p>We are MABAS - Redbird C/D – <i>Mark Sikorski</i> An open discussion about what it really means to be part of the MABAS system. This session looks at shared responsibility, teamwork, and the role each of us plays in keeping the system strong. <i>How does your role support the success of MABAS statewide?</i></p>
0900 – 1000	<p>Breakout Sessions</p> <p>MABAS Basics – Redbird C/D – <i>Tom Clifton</i> A practical overview of how MABAS started, how box cards work, and the critical role telecommunicators play when alarms are announced. Ideal for reinforcing the fundamentals that keep the system moving.</p> <p>MABAS Advanced – Redbird E – <i>Mark Sikorski and Rachel Thompson</i> Looks at dispatching and notifications during escalating incidents, including support across MABAS Divisions and Special Team activations. Focus on coordination when incidents grow beyond local resources.</p>
1000 – 1015	Break with Vendors – Redbird B
1015 – 1100	<p>Assets, Special Teams and the STIC - Redbird C/D – <i>Mark Sikorski and Darb Calvert</i> Review available MABAS assets and deployable Special Teams, along with how the Statewide Terrorism Intelligence Center fits into the bigger picture. Emphasis is on awareness and coordination.</p>
1100 – 1130	<p>The State of MABAS – Redbird C/D – <i>Chief Bernie Lyons</i> A look at where MABAS has been, where it stands today, and where it's headed. This session highlights system growth, challenges, and future priorities.</p>
1100 – 1400	Illinois APCO/NENA Meeting – Redbird A
1130 – 1200	<p>Illinois Pipeline Emergency Responders Initiative – Redbird C/D – <i>Chief Raymond Kay</i> An overview of a program designed to strengthen communication and relationships between responders, pipeline operators, and regulators. Learn how coordinated planning improves safety and response effectiveness.</p>
1200 – 1300	Lunch with Vendors – Redbird C/D
1300 – 1430	Dispatch Simulator available! Sign up at the registration tables and bring your local box cards. North Executive Boardroom – <i>Joe McGrath</i>

1300 – 1500	The Stop and Go of a Local Incident and Beyond – Redbird C/D – <i>Chris Lienhardt and Michael Graves</i> Ever wonder what happens behind the scenes when an incident escalates statewide? This interactive session walks through each step of an activation from start to finish. You'll leave with a clearer picture of roles, timing, and decision points.
1500 – 1515	Break with Vendors – Redbird A/B
1515 – 1615	Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (IL-TERT) Overview – Redbird C/D – <i>Heather Butler</i> Covers what IL-TERT is, what members do, and how deployments work. The session also explains training requirements and shares recent taskforce activity.
1615 – 1630	Administrative Announcements & Day's Summary – Redbird C/D
Evening	On Your Own – Enjoy Bloomington-Normal

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Friday	February 20, 2026	
0700 – 0800	Breakfast for Attendees & Vendors – Redbird Lobby – Vendor Sponsor	
0800 – 0900	MABAS Year in Review – Redbird C/D – <i>Rachel Thompson</i> A video presentation highlighting MABAS-IL activities and deployments throughout 2025. A chance to see the scope and impact of the system over the past year.	
0900 – 1000	SWIT and Radio Templates – Redbird C/D – <i>Steve Rauter</i> A brief update on the Statewide Interoperability Template (SWIT) for public safety radios and dispatch centers. Includes where to find resources and how the templates support consistent radio use across disciplines.	
1000 – 1030	Break - Redbird Lobby	CHECK OUT TIME!!!
1030 – 1145	Mental Health Strength and Conditioning – Redbird C/D – <i>Cindy McKnight, Kyle Rayome, and Patrick O'Sullivan</i> Explores practical ways to strengthen mental wellness through intentional habits and daily choices. The session focuses on building resilience, self-awareness, and sustainable coping strategies that support long-term well-being.	
1145 – 1200	Closing Comments and Wrap Up – The Communications Mentors	