



MABAS-Wisconsin Getting Started Checklist

As areas of the State of Wisconsin realize the benefits of becoming part of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System, the interest will grow into action toward division status. You have already taken the first step by obtaining this “Getting Started Checklist.”

The necessary steps of becoming a division will require effort and leadership, however the end goal of becoming a division providing a greater level of fire, special rescue, and emergency medical services to your community will be realized. The “Getting Started Checklist” was developed from the planning, development, and implementation efforts of current MABAS divisions providing a “best practices” list for newly forming divisions. The “Getting Started Checklist” will make the process more organized and the transition journey a greater success.

What is the Interest?

Many of the MABAS divisions are generally formed within a single county, however this is not a mandatory requirement. Counties that share a border and each having a reduced population density and geographical area may team together to form a single division; while a county of high population or large geographical area may choose to develop separate divisions. In most instances, a county having at least 4 communities with contiguous borders is the best recipe for forming a division.

Many areas have fire and EMS organizations associations, i.e. a county fire chiefs association, where the interest will start. From that group, we strongly recommend that the organization form a steering committee or workgroup to address the major steps. If the interest exists, the committee will provide the management and support that will be necessary for the process. The steering committee will prove to be a valuable asset for the member agencies, and will directly impact the amount of time the implementation process will take.

Contact MABAS-Wisconsin

When the interest changes to action, the official journey begins with contacting MABAS-Wisconsin to inform us of the interest in forming a division. Call or email to let us know about the intent to form a division with the municipalities in your area. We can provide an overview of the process and discuss the resources available, i.e. “Getting Started”

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presentation, fire and dispatch personnel training, and box card development. Visit MABAS-Wisconsin website www.mabaswisconsin.org, the “Contact Us” link for the MABAS-Wisconsin Executive Board officers. You can also have us place you on the MABAS-Wisconsin email group; you will be provided with periodic information about the most up-to-date information on mutual aid and communications in the State.

Communications

Invariably interoperable communications becomes the most discussed and widely misunderstood step in the planning and implementing process, and it creates the most difficulty. Much has been written on interoperability, P25 compliance, narrow-banding, and federal grants creating the confusion. We strongly recommend discussing communications at the very beginning of the process since the purchase of radio equipment may be necessary. If purchases are necessary, budget planning may take a period of time.

All MABAS communications occur on simplex, VHF (150-160 MHz) high band frequencies, so operating currently on the VHF band is a big plus. The communications in MABAS occur on 2 separate, but necessary levels. The first level is dispatching – the primary dispatch radio frequency is IFERN (Interagency Fire Emergency Radio Network). Dispatch communications include alerting of member agencies, communications with resources reporting their responding and in-staging status, and where initial assignments are given by the incident commander; the second level of communication is at the incident operations level (typically on MABAS Red, White, and Blue Fireground simplex frequencies) where all tactical/incident level communications occur. Only the incident commander communicates on both of these communication levels. There are two communications questions that should be answered very soon in the process:

1. What agencies will provide MABAS dispatching?

Each division will need to have a primary and a back up dispatch center for MABAS dispatching. If there is only one dispatch center for the entire area, then consider the neighboring MABAS division or county dispatch center as the backup – each dispatch center must have adequate radio coverage on IFERN is necessary for the geographical area of the pending division. Providing the funding for adequate radio coverage and obtaining the necessary radio equipment will be the greatest financial challenge in the process. Early determination of these communication needs and budget planning will shorten the implementation process. Contact MABAS-Wisconsin, we may be able to provide assistance in finding funding sources for the dispatching equipment.

2. How are communications in MABAS accomplished?

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The planning process for MABAS communications must consider how everyday business is accomplished (on which frequency band) and how agencies will communicate in MABAS (on VHF high band). The minimum communications needs in MABAS are IFERN at the dispatching level and Red, White, and Blue on the fireground level. Visit MABAS-Wisconsin website, the ‘Communications’ link for the State of Wisconsin Mutual Aid Frequency Plan 2006, which provides the complete mutual aid frequency list. These frequencies have been licensed by the State Patrol for public safety agencies for mutual aid mobile and portable interoperability. Public safety agencies need only notify the State Frequency Coordinator, utilizing the “State Frequency Authorization Request” form found in the above document. Dispatch center base stations must be licensed by Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule. Application for base station can be found on the FCC website at <http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls/index.htm?job=home> .

MABAS Adoption by Local Municipality

The MABAS-Wisconsin Agreement is an inter-governmental agreement, which means that only municipalities or units of government sign the Agreement. Most member agencies are required to have an enabling document, i.e. local resolution or ordinance by the local governing body, to allow the chief elected official to sign and the municipal clerk to verify the MABAS Agreement. The State of Wisconsin has adopted MABAS as the official mutual aid plan through Senate Bill 642, signed by Governor James Doyle in April 2006, and has authorized the inclusion of administrative rules (WEM 8) for implementation of the plan. MABAS-Wisconsin has provided sample resolutions to assist in developing the resolution. The sample resolutions can be found on the website, in the “Getting Started” link. The completed resolutions are sent to the MABAS-Wisconsin Secretary/Treasurer. There are two types of resolutions:

1. MABAS Contract-Addendum B 121307 – This is a sample resolution is for municipalities that are provided with coverage by private EMS and fire district companies (organized under Chapter 181 or 213, Stats.). This resolution authorizes the top elected official and the municipal clerk to sign the agreement, allowing the private company(s) to participate in the MABAS through the municipality.
2. MABAS Contract-Addendum C 121307 – This is a sample resolution for municipalities that provide municipal fire and EMS coverage. The resolution authorizes the top elected official and the municipal clerk to sign the MABAS-WI Agreement.

MABAS-Wisconsin Agreement

Member agencies are required to have the MABAS-Wisconsin Agreement signed by the chief elected official and clerk of the municipality or unit of government. The Agreement gives the legal provisions for mutual aid throughout the State and other states in MABAS, and from the entire MABAS system. It further spells out the Administrative Rules of WEM 8; it addresses the necessary liability, Worker’s Compensation, and indemnification language that an inter-governmental agreement must contain.

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The Agreement wording and provisions cannot be changed and is only available in an Adobe format, with exception of the signature page. The signature page can be changed to fit the format needs of the local municipality. The completed division Agreement is submitted to the MABAS-Wisconsin Secretary/Treasurer. Visit MABAS-Wisconsin website, in the “Getting Started” section for the Agreement and the signature page. Contact the MABAS-Wisconsin Executive Board for any assistance with the contract.

Application for Division Status

When the letter of intent has been sent in, the dispatching and communication needs have been planned, and the resolutions and agreements of the member municipalities have been signed, the Application for Division Status can be sent in for approval. All new divisions are approved by the Board of Directors at a regular business meeting – the Board is comprised of the existing members of MABAS-Wisconsin. The policy for Application for Division Status and the guideline for developing an implementation plan can be found on the website, in the “Policies, Procedures and Guidelines” link. For assistance with the application, contact a member of the Executive Board.

General Operating Procedures

The Mutual Aid Box Alarm System is premised on a “standardized” system in all areas. To accomplish the standardized system, MABAS-Wisconsin has developed a **General Operating Procedures** manual. These procedures have been adopted by MABAS-Wisconsin and are a starting point for the division to address response in the local area as it relates to a MABAS response.

The MABAS-Wisconsin system allows for minor changes in the Procedures when operating internally to the division, although when deploying inter-divisionally, the Procedures must be followed. For example, division members have agreed to staffing levels for engine and truck response of two personnel is acceptable; however, if there is an interdivisional response, the staffing levels of engines and trucks are four. Much of this document is “boiler plate” operational procedures in the MABAS system in the State and some of the procedures will not pertain to every division.

MABAS-Wisconsin has other policies, procedures, and guidelines, available on the website, that provide standardization of the system administration and organization, special operational needs, and mission support structures. All official documents of MABAS-Wisconsin are approved by the Board of Directors, which are comprised of the representatives of each division. Any changes in the General Operating Procedures by the division must be submitted to the MABAS-Wisconsin Secretary/Treasurer and are approved by MABAS-Wisconsin Board of Directors at a regular business meeting.

Box Card Development

Each division member will need to develop box cards; the box cards identify the required MABAS resources that are necessary for a given emergency event in a given response

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area. There are numerous box card types, however individual members must evaluate their response area risks and identify the box cards that address that risk. Visit MABAS-Wisconsin website “Getting Started” link for the *Box Card Design* guideline. Contact MABAS-Wisconsin Executive Board for questions and assistance with box card development.

At the point where divisions begin to develop their box cards in where the divisions begin to see the value of MABAS. Having box card meetings gives local emergency responders a chance to inventory what is available in their area, and address the response risk; it can also be a networking session to discuss common challenges. Mutual aid was based on neighbor helping neighbor and these meetings will bridge the reluctance to ask for help without exhausting the resources of your close neighbor only.

The complete and latest version of the division box cards will be entered in Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) website, E-sponder, at <http://www.wiesponder.com/> . The website is emergency management tool for local, county and state emergency operations centers. The box cards can be accessed by secure logon and found in the Special Projects link divided by MABAS-Wisconsin/WEM region and division. Within each division folder is the individual municipalities and their box cards. The website is password protected and an application process is necessary for access to E-sponder – visit the website for registration information.

Training

Your fire, special rescue, and emergency medical resources, and your dispatching personnel will require training on MABAS policies and procedures. The steering committee will be the key to the success of MABAS implementation and therefore it is strongly suggested to have at least one training officer be part of the steering committee. MABAS-Wisconsin can provide training to your division or assist your training officer in the process. Visit MABAS-Wisconsin website, the “Training and Education” link for training materials that are available. Also contact MABAS-Wisconsin Executive Board to set up a training session in your area.

Set “Go Live” Date

Many fire departments are able to complete their box cards early in the process and begin calling each other by phone for assistance using the alarm levels established. Depending on the number and complexity of the issues encountered, there will be a point that the new division members will decide to go live. It is a good idea to have the steering committee/workgroup monitor the start up time and provide feedback to the county/regional association. Based on past experiences, it will be a very exciting time becoming a functioning member of the largest mutual aid system in the country. Good Luck.