Waukesha Uses MABAS for Fire in Extreme Weather

BY TIM SNOPEK, MABAS PHOTOGRAPHER/CONTRIBUTOR AND GARY SCHMIDT

We’re all familiar with Wisconsin summers – it is normal for June, July, and August to have hot humid days and cooler nights. By September, night temperatures dip into the fifties. But this day in Waukesha was not normal.

First of all, it was September 12, 2019. Secondly, it was after 11pm and the temps (and humidity/dew points) were rising from the sixties to over 70 degrees. It started to rain, not a little, but violently, falling at a rate of over an inch an hour. Within the next few hours, over 2 inches of rain would fall. It got real windy, gusting at 20-30 mph.

Some City of Waukesha Fire Department units were already on the road, responding to various calls. Then it happened – a call came in at 11:24pm reporting lightning striking the Hillcrest Park Apartments at 1802 Shepherd Court, in Waukesha.

A “Still” assignment was sent, some of which diverted from other calls:

- Three Engines (E1, E2, E4)
- Two Ladder Trucks (L2, L5)
- Four ambulances (A51, A52, A53, A54)
- One Battalion Chief (B10)

The torrential rainfall and very wet road conditions slowed responding units. Upon arrival at 11:29pm, B10 found moderate smoke issuing from the roof of a 42-unit, 3-story, 242’ x 80’ apartment building, reported a working fire, and upgraded the alarm to a working still using MABAS Division 106 Box Card 15-11.

Smoke detector alarms were sounding, and a city bus was requested to house the displaced, evacuating residents.

E1 arrived directly behind B10 and was given the task of fire attack. The E1 Lieutenant (Lt) and Firefighter (FF) made their way to the 3rd floor, encountering residents evacuating along the way. Once on the 3rd floor, the crew encountered the building manager who said he was clearing apartments.

After obtaining the building master key from him, the E1 Lt informed the manager to exit the building. The E1 crew split up to check apartments, looking for the one affected by the fire.

As E1 Lt made his way down the hall clearing apartments on the A-B end (the A-side is the front, then B-C-D sides are designated in a clockwise fashion), E1 Lt came upon yet another resident that was still in her apartment and informed her that “she had to exit; the building was on fire”.

The E1 Lt was then notified by the E1 FF that he had found the apartment that was on fire on the C-side of the complex (the C-Side would be the rear of the building).

While this was going on, E4 was ordered to supply water to E1 from a hydrant, then check every apartment on the 2nd floor. E4 found and removed 3 residents. E4 then proceeded to clear the 1st floor.

L2 and A52 responded emergency from a false fire alarm elsewhere in the city and were ordered to raise the aerial ladder to the roof at the front of the building to assess roof conditions.

L2 had difficulty accessing the building due to the number of occupants leaving the parking area in their vehicles.

Once into position, L2’s crew climbed to the roof and reported that the fire appears to be located on C-side at the midpoint of the building. B10 ordered a trench-like hole be cut into the roof (called a “trench-cut”).

As a fire burns, there is a dangerous heat and smoke build-up, sometimes combined with toxic explosive chemicals emitted from burning objects.

In conjunction with engine crews putting water on the fire, the roof...
Good Advice, Best Practices or Policy of Mother MABAS? It seems a lot of the questions we hear during our travels is just that.

When it comes to running your Divisions, it takes a lot of work and patience to get the formula for success just right.

Recently we have been hearing more and more of the requested units taking passes. It certainly can throw a wrench into the proverbial pile when your first calls are vacated. So what’s the answer?

Well, the first answer is to make sure you have your cards filled out completely per the policy. It allows that dispatcher to simply follow the roll to get what you need in a timely manner.

Second, check with your neighbors to keep up to date on what they can realistically support you with, and validate your cards making sure the correct sequence and apparatus are listed... a best practice.

The Final one from the great and almost famous Rob Goblin (MABAS WI Secretary). Check the phone numbers and identify those you are going to need in emergency. As we always preach, during an emergency is not the time to find that your call list hasn’t been updated in two years.

Recent exercises continue to exhibit that as much as some claim they are up to date, the reality is that they really need to be dusted off more often than the Christmas ornaments.

As we continue to travel down the road of less and less resources, MABAS continues to see increase in demand and activation.

We’re faced with the same challenges your department is, dwindling resources in both staffing and funding, but we understand the critical role we play. So as always, THANK YOU, for the time and commitment. We look forward to seeing you, whether at a regional meeting, a Presidents roundtable or the annual conference. All are always welcome!

Till the Next Box
By this time, E4 also reported “All clear” in the building. Fire conditions worsened, with heavy fire venting through the roof now visible from the A-side, indicating the risky interior (offensive) attack was having little effect. B10 ordered all units to evacuate the building and pursued a defensive strategy on the building (fighting the fire from the exterior).

L2 and L5 began flowing elevated master streams (high flow of water from nozzles attached to the extended aerial ladders).

Additional large diameter handlines and ground monitors (devices with large nozzles that hose lines connect to requiring minimal manpower) were deployed to the C-side and A/B-corner of the building.

All units remained in a defensive posture until the main body of the fire was controlled. A fire investigation team was requested to the scene.

At approximately 1:07am, an offensive strategy was adopted, and units were deployed to the 3rd floor to control remaining spot fires and begin overhaul.

City of Waukesha units E7 and L1 and Working Still mutual aid units from Pewaukee, Town of Brookfield and Town of Waukesha were rotated into the extinguishment and overhaul efforts on the 3rd floor. Progress was slowed by the amount of debris on the 3rd floor.

At approximately 1:57am, B10 requested an upgrade to the BOX Level alarm on Box Card 15-11. Mutual aid units from Town of Delafield, Vernon, City of Brookfield, Lake Country, Wales, Elm Grove, Sussex and Tess Corners responded and were rotated through operations on the 3rd floor.

Overhaul efforts continued until approximately 6:29am. Additional City of Waukesha FD units remained on scene assisting residents and assuring extinguishment until 1:11pm (September 13, 2019).

It was raining so hard, note the raindrops bouncing off the driveway in the lower picture
(Photos by timmopec.com).
On September 13, 2019, around 5am, a neighbor noticed smoke coming from the Deer Camp Bar & Pavilion, located at N4096 County Road K (at Porter Rd) in the Town of Waukechon on the outskirts of Shawano, WI. This is about 40 miles northwest of Green Bay near WI-29.

At 5:06am, the Shawano Area Fire Department (SAFD) was dispatched by the Shawano County Sheriff who took the call. This was a bar/restaurant with a large pavilion hall attached. They had large parties and receptions there. Above the bar was an apartment living quarters. The building was around since at least the 1960’s.

Being familiar with the building, right away we called for a working still which gives us a tender and a chief from Bonduel Fire, who is very close - only about 5 miles away.

Upon arrival, we had a building, 100’ x 60’, with the main bar being two stories. We estimated about 7,000 square feet in total. Smoke was coming from the A-side (front) of the building. It turned out that the fire had a huge head start on us.

Soon, the entire building was fully involved. The entire building (main bar and ballroom) had a steel roof which eventually collapsed.

We upgraded to MABAS Division 133 Card 1-22 to the box alarm level for tenders only. Thirty minutes later, we upgraded to the second alarm level box for tenders.

In all, SAFD had four engines, four tenders, one 105’ ladder truck, one heavy rescue and seven mutual aid tenders working at the fire. Shuttling water for such a large building makes it very tough. We used two city hydrants for fill sites.

We pumped approximately 250,000 gallons of water and cleared the scene about 2pm.

We had to use an excavator to remove the roof once it collapsed.

The steel roof made it very difficult to get at the fire and hot spots.

This fire was a huge loss.

There were a lot of history and fond memories.

I have been Chief for almost four years and this was the first time we had to call a box alarm let alone a second alarm level box.

MABAS is used when needed; seems like it goes in streaks. When there are new dispatch personnel, they seem to struggle a little bit, but it just takes a little practice. Overall, our dispatch does a great job.

MABAS works great. It allows the Incident Commander (IC) to gain resources very quickly and easy. The IC then has time to worry about other tasks that need to get done. As you know the first few minutes is very hectic for the IC.

Fire Departments in our area are volunteer staffed. It was 5am, so we had responders available.

Many of our staff took the day off. SAFD had 35 firefighters and mutual aid gave us 16 more at the fire.

They are very dedicated. There were a couple that had to go to work but some of our staff works 3rd shift so it all worked out. Our mutual aid partners stayed as long as we needed them.

You have to appreciate the dedication of volunteer firefighters; so many willing to use a vacation day to fight such a large fire (as chief I took a vacation day myself).
The Wisconsin Emergency Management Association (WEMA) was close to canceling its annual conference because the State (WEM) decided to stop holding an “All Directors” meeting the day following our conference. We were confident that a single day conference without the WEM-required meeting day would render our conference lost.

In 2019, WEMA partnered with MABAS Wisconsin’s annual conference. It has turned out to be successful for both organizations.

As an Emergency Manager (EM) and a Fire Chief in southwest WI, I find the relationship I have with other Fire, EMS and Law agencies is a luxury I enjoy, not necessarily the norm throughout the state.

By bringing the two conferences together, we become a powerful tool for teaching the importance of Fire, EMS, Law and EM to be more integrated in their planning, response, recovery and even mitigation efforts.

Bringing an EM into an incident is like having another arm or two arms. They specialize in areas most don’t want to deal with, including:

- Debris Management
- Volunteer Management
- Donations Management
- Access to the National Guard
- Public Information Officer duties
- EOC Support for First Responders
- Dispatch support for obtaining resources

We hope the conference continues to instill an atmosphere of teamwork and provides an opportunity to expand capabilities in the field more rapidly.

Overall the two conferences joining forces is healthy for both entities. It’s also important that they both maintain their own identities and we work to establish continuity between the two conferences that encourages attendees to start at the beginning of the week and not leave until the end.

Bobbi Hicken (WEMA Treasurer) points out: “I think it is important to note that emergency management tends to be the “man behind the curtain” and not everyone knows what we are able to do to assist and sometimes just as important, what we don’t/can’t do”.

“Anytime we can bring everyone (Fire, EMS, EM, Dispatch) together and learn more about what we all do, the better we are all together.”

The Emergency Management Interaction with the Fire Service
By Keith Hurlbert

Statewide there are few emergency incidents that warrant a full EOC activation. When that happens, it’s a small percentage that actually incorporate a presence of a Fire representative, but we plan for that. A fire representative in the EOC can quickly translate slang, acronyms, assist with obtaining special resources and participate in planning for operational periods. It’s good to have Fire Communicating with Fire Command, EMS Communicating with EMS Command, Law Communicating with Law Command when talking resource needs. The EM provides the path to those resources

It’s also important to bring to light that after the response is done and Fire, EMS, and Law go home, Emergency Management works with communities throughout their recovery and if necessary or appropriate, mitigation. Even for incidents that are less than a disaster, depending on the scope, can still require EM involvement weeks and months after the incident. After action reviews, adjustments to protocol, policy, disaster reimbursement, and plan reviews all come into play after major incidents.

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Contributor ......Chuck Liedtke (Milwaukee Fire Bell Club)
Contributor ......Tim Snopek (Waukesha County)

Let us know when you have a circumstance where you found yourself “thinking outside the MABAS Box card”!
Ten years ago, in 2009, Independence Day fell on a Saturday, making for a long weekend of celebration.

That included the Popp family who lived down the street from the sprawling Patrick Cudahy plant in Cudahy, Wisconsin (a suburb of Milwaukee). It was Sunday, July 5th, 2009, and 23-year-old Joshua Popp was visiting from California, hanging around with his 25-year-old brother, Kurtis.

Joshua brought with him a live M125 green star cluster flare that he found while training with the Marine Reserves at Camp Wilson in California in 2007. According to Court filings, the boys decided to launch the flare outside the family home at 9:23pm.

Their mother was quoted in the local papers saying her sons were “just being idiots” at the barbeque. Things didn’t go as planned however. The flare landed on the roof of a closed down part of the meat processing plant two blocks away.

Ten years ago, the reality was MABAS Wisconsin was still in its infancy. On paper, there were 19 divisions, but most were not at the active level - they did not have a MABAS response yet.

Milwaukee County MABAS Division 107 became active in 2006 with 2 events, 4 responses in 2007 & 2008 each, and 3 incidents through the first half of 2009, none of which exceeded a 2nd alarm. The Division covered 19 municipalities and a major airport. On July, 5, 2009, it was comprised of 12 fire departments and experienced only 13 MABAS responses over 4 years between them.

At 9:52pm on that Sunday, the Cudahy Fire Department received the call from Patrick Cudahy Security. It wouldn’t be until the following Friday (July 10th) that Cudahy Fire crews turned the scene over to Patrick Cudahy Security. Then on Saturday July 11th, a sunny, hot, and humid day, there was a structure collapse within the ruins that started cardboard and similar material on fire buried deep beneath the rubble caused by demolition crews. That resulted in another MABAS 3rd alarm response.

In between, 64 Fire Departments became involved in the response from southeast Wisconsin. This would be the first MABAS response for most of those departments, most of those firefighters, most of those dispatchers.

It worked. Full-time career firefighters worked alongside paid-on-call and volunteer firefighters, most of which had never worked together before (and haven’t since then) and it was seamless. It underscored the value and reasons for standardization that is the foundation of MABAS.

At the time, Cudahy Fire Department Chief Dan Mayer said: "This was the largest structure fire in the State of Wisconsin, and it was nothing short of a world-class response". Indeed, it was also the largest MABAS response at that time only to be surpassed a few years later by the Echo Foods fire in Burlington (Division 102).

Chief Mayer was a new chief (appointed 3 months prior) from a different department in the County so he did not have an in-depth knowledge of the plant.

However, with the support provided by MABAS (lots of neighboring Chiefs, Emergency Management, regional standardized Dispatch protocols) he was able to handle a Haz Mat situation (ammonia lines threatened throughout the plant), an evacuation of the City, a potential loss of water supply (despite a hydranted municipal system drawing from Lake Michigan) and possible loss of one of the area’s main employers (the plant was saved).

The incident formed the first issue of this newsletter. But never told before was the story of the dispatchers.

That story appears on the next page.
THE DISPATCHERS' STORY BEHIND THE LARGEST STRUCTURE FIRE IN WISCONSIN

BY TONI PETERSON, CUDAHY DISPATCH

Editor’s Note: the City of Cudahy has its own communications center – another suburb, Wauwatosa, handles the MABAS dispatching for Milwaukee County MABAS Division 107.

Recollection by one of the Dispatchers that was on duty in Cudahy Dispatch at the onset of the Patrick Cudahy (PC) Fire of 2009. The dispatcher no longer works at Cudahy but this depicts some of her memories:

I probably remember the emotion more. Because of the nature of the fire, I think my partner and I were pretty much at the “hurry up and wait” phase. When PC security called, they said all the alarms were going off and they’d gone over the building several times and just couldn’t find anything….unless it was in the walls/ceiling.

I remember the feeling of dread and thinking exactly, “This could be something. This could be nothing.” I think I took a deep breath, whispered, “%^&&**,” and rallied my partner. So essentially, they were calling as a precaution because they were stumped.

I don’t remember how anyone actually found the fire, but gauged my level of concern by my Police C/O’s (Commanding Officer) reaction because he was definitely not one to make a mountain out of a molehill.

I remember them talking about walking on the roof of the building and that it was pretty soft already, but I don’t remember when they actually found it. They found it while we were still on-shift and I do remember our Police C/O setting up a command post shortly after and logistical stuff started rolling pretty quickly.

By the end of our shift, we had a “full assignment” or first box started and once MABAS Dispatch was involved, we could focus on the police end. It was really hard to start it and then go home as I liked to finish the craziness I started. I do remember waking up to helicopters and feeling a little personally responsible for bringing my black cloud to work. No dispatcher wants their bad juju to evacuate a city and their voice making national news!

As for any issues we had, like I said, it’s hard to remember. My partner and I handled fires well together. The only things I can think of is that we were pretty good at the low level MABAS responses because, as is the issue with most fire calls, we had more practice with them.

We always seem to be more comfortable with police operations because we get more practice. We just don’t get the repetition for fire like we do police, so there’s always a little uncertainty and call volume is lower.

I think there was uncertainty at a point as to what we were still responsible for after turning fire dispatch over to MABAS Dispatch.

I know with one fire, it may not have been Patrick Cudahy, there were some resources we were supposed to call according to the chart (Box Card) that we had to Google to figure out what it even was (I think it was some amateur radio group or something like that).

But who trains a situation to THAT level? We practice what we already think is unimaginable, but who trains for situations far beyond that?

And probably in that situation, even if someone had told us what each of those resources were, the adrenaline is so high, who knows.

Recollection by Dispatchers coming on duty the morning after the fire started:

The morning after the fire started was a Monday morning after the holiday weekend. An additional Dispatcher was called in to relieve a second shifter that held over until 0500 hours. An evacuation was called at 0650 hours. This occurred after many residents had already left for work, which later resulted in dozens of phone calls coming into the Dispatch Center with citizens wanting to return to their homes to get items (pets and medications). Dispatch was not evacuated/relocated.

We went to a level-8 SMART Response for police (40 units responded). We had some hiccups with radio communications (not all responding units had communications on our channels and we definitely did not have enough spare radio’s for that level of response). With today’s radio interoperability between agencies, a similar situation may not have the same type of communications issue.

Regular course of business in our center is covering two consoles, with a 3rd position being a back-up. On July 6th, 2009, between 0000-2359 hours, our Dispatch Center fielded just over 1,200 phone calls and all 3 positions were being used.

We had two members of TERT (Telecommunicator Emergency Taskforce) that arrived in Dispatch and we were not prepared for how we could use them.

Police and Fire knew how to utilize Mutual Aid (but Dispatch didn’t).
MABAS WISCONSIN ASSISTS MABAS MICHIGAN

The President of MABAS Michigan Division 3801 asked for assistance from MABAS Wisconsin to help move their development along.

Division 3801 borders MABAS WI Division 144 (Marinette County) and due to the geographic nature of the State of Michigan, MABAS-WI resources are closer than their executives in Lansing, a 9-hour drive. The MABAS-MI Executive Director agreed. The doctrine is the same everywhere in MABAS with just small nuances for differences between states.

Getting Division 3801 on board will help with mutual aid between them and MABAS WI Division 144. Note: while MABAS-MI uses a 4-digit Division number, they conform to the standard that MABAS-IL Divisions are in the 1-99 range (essentially beginning with “0”), MABAS-WI divisions begin with “1”, MABAS-IN begins with “2”, and MABAS-MI begins with “3”.

It should also be noted that “gubernatorial agreements” between Wisconsin & Michigan are needed. Language has been drafted by the WEM Legal Counsel. Next step is to get the language reviewed by the WI Attorney General, who will probably also reach out to the Michigan AG for concurrence. Wisconsin and Illinois have such agreements.

MABAS-WI sent educators and two Regional Coordinators for informational settings and did some dispatch training.

MABAS WISCONSIN NAMES NEW NORTHEAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Josh Klug is no stranger to the fire service. He started full-time in the fire service when he was hired by the Merrill Fire Department in October of 2002.

Josh has been around the fire service his entire life. His dad, Bob Klug, served the Merrill Fire Department for over 30 years as a Lieutenant.

After a year at college, Josh realized that he wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps. Josh ended up taking EMT – Basic at Northcentral Technical College and earned an Associate Degree in Fire Protection from Fox Valley Technical College.

After being hired in 2002, Josh upgraded to EMT - Paramedic with other members of the Merrill Fire Department in 2006. Continuing his education and training was important, so Josh enrolled in the Fire and Emergency Management bachelor degree program at the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh and completed his degree in 2013.

The Merrill Fire Department promoted Josh to Lieutenant in 2010. In early 2013, Josh left the Merrill Fire Department to accept the position of Fire Chief with the Mosinee Fire District, becoming the first full-time chief of that department.

After 3 years with Mosinee, he took the position of Deputy Fire Chief with the City of Wausau Fire Department. In May of 2018, he returned to the Merrill Fire Department as their Fire Chief. He continues to serve in that capacity now.

Josh holds multiple state and national certifications in fire, emergency management, EMS, and incident command. In addition to the training he has received, Josh has been an adjunct instructor for Nicolet Technical College since 2010.

In 2014, Josh also joined the Northeast Incident Management Team. From 2015 – 2018, Josh served as President of MABAS Division 130 and helped merge the division with the long standing county fire and rescue association in Marathon County.

And now, in 2019, Josh was selected as the new MABAS Northeast Regional Coordinator.

None of his professional accomplishments would be possible without the love and support of his wife, Megan.

Josh and his wife have been married for 17 years and reside in Merrill with their three children.
Incident Reporting Is Easy To Do
MABAS Wisconsin has a tool in place to log the use of MABAS. The Incident Entry Portal can be accessed via http://incident.mabaswisconsin.org or through http://www.mabaswisconsin.org using the DBMS Login drop down box.

To enter an incident, login with a UserID of mabas and a password of wisconsin. After the initial entry, Departments need their specific credentials to alter the incident information or to alter the other information on the site.

Departments should contact their Division President for the login information.

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<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Div.</th>
<th>Host Agency</th>
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<td>119</td>
<td>PORT WASHINGTON VOL FIRE DEPT</td>
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<td>MUKWONAGO FIRE DEPT</td>
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As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, MABAS Wisconsin relies on donations and sponsors to further its mission of mutual aid, associated systems, and training.

We thank the following organizations for their sponsorship:

Mutual Aid Labs provides world-class software to emergency services agencies without regard to their size. For too long size and budget has dictated the quality of technology available to these agencies, Mutual Aid Labs will provide software that revolutionizes processes and procedures, in such a way that it does not place undue burden on an agency's budget.

Mutual Aid Labs is the provider of EMABAS full electronic implementation of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS).

EMABAS converts box cards from static data to dynamic documents that change as departments and agencies change; EMABAS transforms the manner in which you plan and respond.

The desktop version of EMABAS provides the main interface for creating and using box cards. It also provides interfaces into resources, contacts, dispatch and reporting. Additionally the system has the ability to aid agencies in the use of MABAS during actual calls.
MABAS - Wisconsin
Mutual Aid Box Alarm System
Organized 2004

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MABAS OPERATING FREQUENCIES
IFERN MABAS Alerting & Intra-Divisional Responses
IFERN2 Alternate Intra-Divisional Responses
MABAS1 (WISCOM) Inter-Divisional Responses
MABAS2 (WISCOM) Contact with Wisconsin Red Center
Regional Coordinators - WEM Coordination

MABAS WI Divisions
101 – Kenosha County
102 – Racine County
103 – Walworth County
104 – Rock County
105 – Green County
106 – Waukesha County
107 – Milwaukee County
108 – Grant County
110 – Portage County
111 – Washington County
112 – Brown County
113 – Sheboygan County
114 – Oneida County
115 – Dane County
116 – Wood County
117 – Dunn/Pepin County
118 – Jefferson County
119 – Ozaukee County
120 – Fond du Lac County
121 – Vilas County
122 – Calumet County
123 – Winnebago County
124 – Iowa County
125 – Lafayette County
126 – Eau Claire County
127 – Outagamie County
128 – Manitowoc County
129 – Dodge County
130 – Marathon County
131 – Sauk County
132 – Chippewa County
133 – Shawano/Menominee Cnty
134 – La Crosse County
135 – Columbia County
136 – Juneau County
137 – Oconto County
138 – Kewaunee County
139 – Jackson County
140 – Trempealeau County
141 – Green Lake County
142 – Waupaca County
143 – St. Croix County
144 – Marinette County
145 – Monroe County
146 – Florence County
147 – Langlade County
148 – Buffalo County
149 – Price County
150 – Richland County
151 – Waushara County
152 – Clark County
153 – Forest County
154 – Door County
155 – Lincoln County
156 – Pierce County
157 – Vernon County
158 – Ashland County
159 – Taylor County
160 – Sawyer County
161 – Polk County
162 – Crawford County