

NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT		
Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Amber Alert Plan		AOM: O-217
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: [41.2.6.a], [41.2.6.c]		Issuing Authority <hr/> Jody Kasper Chief of Police
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Table of Contents

I.	Introductory Discussion	1
II.	Initial Response.....	2
III.	Criteria For The Amber Alert Notification Activation.....	2
IV.	Guidelines.....	2
V.	Activation Request.....	3
VI.	Termination.....	3

I. Introductory Discussion

The Massachusetts AMBER Alert Plan is a voluntary, cooperative effort involving the Massachusetts Chief of Police Association, the Massachusetts State Police, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, and local broadcasters. Radio, cable, and television stations statewide will receive a child abduction alert message and may broadcast this every 30 minutes for up to 4 hours in an effort to solicit the public’s assistance in recovering an abducted child and quickly apprehending the suspect.

Under the Plan, law enforcement will be able to utilize public broadcasters to send an emergency alert statewide when a child under 18 has been abducted, it is believed that the child is in serious danger, and there is sufficient descriptive information to warrant such a public notification.

II. Initial Response

- A. When a report of an abducted child is received over the telephone, the dispatcher receiving the report shall take down all preliminary information and issue a broadcast to all units. The dispatcher shall also notify the Officer-in-Charge.
- B. An officer should then be dispatched to meet the caller and obtain a *Missing Person Affidavit/Verification* in accordance with **AOM 0214, Missing Persons**. [41.2.6,a]
- C. Upon receipt of the necessary information, the Station Officer shall enter all information into the LEAPS/CJIS computer system, and record the NCIC, LEAPS, and OCA numbers on the missing person's report, signing and dating the same. [41.2.6,c]
- D. Should the Station Officer receive notification of an Amber Alert initiated by another agency, they shall immediately notify Central Dispatch and the OIC of the details of the alert.

III. Criteria for the AMBER Alert Notification Activation

- A. The following activation criteria must be followed as closely as possible.
 - 1. The child must be **under the age of 18**, and
 - 2. Police must believe the child is in **danger of serious bodily harm or death**, and
 - 3. There is **enough descriptive information** for law enforcement to believe an AMBER alert will help locate the child.
- B. If all criteria are not met, the AMBER Alert Notification Plan should not be activated.
- C. The Plan should not be used for runaways.
- D. While each case must be judged individually, most "child custody" situations do not meet the criteria.

IV. Guidelines

- A. An AMBER Alert should only be issued for serious child abduction cases. It should not normally be used for runaway or parental-abduction cases, the two leading causes of missing children. The only cause for an alert under these circumstances would be if law enforcement believes the life of the child is in serious danger. Each case will need to be judged on an individual basis.
- B. Circumstances where an AMBER Alert **would be** activated:
 - 1. Child is abducted and there are witnesses to the crime.
 - 2. Child is missing and there is evidence of foul play, and law enforcement believes the child was abducted.

3. Vehicle was stolen or “carjacked” and a child was left inside the vehicle.
4. Child is missing and particular consideration is given to their behavior or mental capacity in some way contributing to their disappearance. The child is also considered endangered.

C. Circumstances where an AMBER alert **would not** be activated:

1. Child is missing and law enforcement has no evidence of foul play.
2. Child runs away from home.
3. Child is missing as a result of a custody dispute and the child is not considered to be at risk of bodily harm or death.
4. An adult is missing

V. Activation Request

- A. Where the three criteria have been met, the Officer-In Charge (OIC) in conjunction with the Detective Bureau Commander shall decide whether to submit an AMBER Alert Activation Request.
- B. It is important to realize that if the system is overused, it will lose credibility and may result in reduced broadcaster participation.
- C. An AMBER Alert Activation Request is submitted by phone to the Massachusetts State Police Communications Section (Comm. Sec) by calling 508-820-2121.
- D. The OIC will also fax the completed AMBER Alert Activation Request form to Communication Section at 508-820-2150 followed by a phone call to confirm they received the fax.
- E. A recent photograph of the abducted child and the suspect, if available, should be obtained and forwarded to the State Police Communications Center, preferably in electronic format.
- F. Upon receipt of the Activation Request, the MSP Communications Section will immediately notify an on-call Alert Activation Officer providing them with the information received. The Alert Activation Officer will then:
 1. Verify the information by calling the requesting police agency;
 2. Determine if the information satisfies the three Amber Alert Criteria; and
 3. Either activate the Alert, or
 4. Decline the Activation Request, and
 5. Notify the requesting agency of their decision.

VI. Termination

The OIC is responsible for notifying the State Police Communications Section immediately when an abducted child is recovered or found.