

Public Alerts

317.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for alerting the public to important information and soliciting public aid when appropriate.

317.2 POLICY

Public alerts may be employed using the Emergency Alert System (EAS), local radio, television and press organizations and other groups to notify the public of incidents, or enlist the aid of the public, when the exchange of information may enhance the safety of the community. Various types of alerts may be available based upon each situation and the alert system's individual criteria.

317.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

317.3.1 EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees of the Lorain Police Department should notify their supervisor, Watch Commander or Public Information Officer as soon as practicable upon learning of a situation where public notification, a warning or enlisting the help of the media and public could assist in locating a missing person, apprehending a dangerous person or gathering information.

317.3.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A supervisor apprised of the need for a public alert is responsible to make the appropriate notifications based upon the circumstances of each situation. The supervisor shall promptly notify the Chief of Police, the appropriate Division Commander and the Public Information Officer (PIO) when any public alert is generated.

The supervisor in charge of the investigation to which the alert relates is responsible for the following:

- (a) Updating alerts
- (b) Canceling alerts
- (c) Ensuring all appropriate reports are completed
- (d) Preparing an after-action evaluation of the investigation to be forwarded to the Division Commander

317.4 AMBER ALERTS™

The AMBER™ Alert Plan was created to assist in the identification and location of abducted children under 18 years of age, whose abduction, as determined by a law enforcement agency, poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the child (ORC § 5502.52). The AMBER Alert utilizes the EAS to broadcast information to the public about the abducted child.

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317.4.1 CRITERIA

An AMBER Alert shall not be activated unless (ORC § 5502.52(B)):

- (a) The Department determines that an abduction has occurred.
- (b) The abducted child is under 18 years of age.
- (c) The child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death.
- (d) The child is not a runaway and has not been abducted as a result of a child custody dispute, unless the dispute poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the child.
- (e) The Department has sufficient descriptive information about the child, the person who is suspected of abducting the child, or other pertinent information to warrant immediate broadcast of the information to help locate the child.

Absent extenuating circumstances that indicate the AMBER Alert broadcast would endanger an abducted child, the AMBER Alert should be activated as soon as possible after the abduction is discovered.

A Missing Child Alert may be activated if the circumstances about the missing child do not meet the AMBER Alert criteria, but the child is in danger of serious physical harm or death (see the Missing Persons Policy).

317.4.2 PROCEDURE

Upon receiving and verifying a report of an abducted child that meets the criteria of an AMBER Alert, the appropriate area of coverage for the activation should be determined. Activations may cover a county, region, state, or multiple states.

In addition, the activating official shall:

- (a) As soon as practicable enter AMBER Alert data into the Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS)/National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database. Use the endangered or involuntary missing codes and the AMBER Alert code to request an AMBER Alert. An in-state AMBER Alert message will automatically be generated to the following:
 - 1. Adjacent counties
 - 2. Ohio State Highway Patrol Central Dispatch Communications Center in Columbus
 - 3. Ohio Attorney General's Office
 - 4. FBI Child Abduction Unit
 - 5. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
 - 6. Ohio media
- (b) Enter a Caution Ohio Police (COP) record into the LEADS database with the suspect's information. Replace the COP entry with a Wanted Person entry as soon as appropriate.

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- (c) Use the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) AMBER screen in LEADS to send a broadcast message to law enforcement in adjacent states when necessary.
- (d) If access to the LEADS/NCIC computer system is unavailable, contact the Ohio State Highway Patrol for assistance with activation of an AMBER Alert.
- (e) Obtain, whenever possible, consent from the parents, guardian or person having legal custody of the abducted child for the release of photographs, descriptions, and other information necessary to support the AMBER Alert broadcast and search. The inability to obtain verbal or signed consent because of the inability to locate a person capable of providing consent shall not prohibit the activation of an AMBER Alert.

To aid in this process, it is imperative that the activating official be notified of all relevant updates regarding the case investigation that may require modification or termination of the AMBER Alert system.

317.5 MISSING ADULT ALERTS

The Missing Adult Alert Program was created to assist in the location and return of those individuals who are elderly, mentally impaired, or who have autism spectrum disorder or another developmental disability who are at risk of immediate danger of serious bodily injury or death (ORC § 5502.522). Activation of a Missing Adult Alert will automatically cause state media outlets and law enforcement agencies to be notified of the individual's disappearance, as well as the following to occur:

- (a) A toll-free telephone line for tips and information will be activated.
- (b) The Missing Adult Alert website will list information about and display a photograph of the missing adult.
- (c) The Missing Children's Clearing House will be provided with information on the missing adult.
- (d) The Ohio Department of Transportation will be notified to post the information on Ohio's highway signs, when appropriate.

317.5.1 CRITERIA

A Missing Adult Alert shall not be activated unless (ORC § 5502.522(B)):

- (a) The Department confirms that an individual who is 65 years of age or older, who has a mental impairment, or who has autism spectrum disorder or another developmental disability is missing. A mental impairment is a substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behavior, or the ability to live independently or provide self-care, as certified by a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist (ORC § 5502.522(G)(3)).
- (b) The individual is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death.
- (c) The Department has sufficient descriptive information about the individual and the circumstances surrounding the individual's disappearance to indicate that activation of the alert will help locate the individual.

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317.5.2 PROCEDURE

Upon receiving and verifying a report of a missing person that meets the criteria of a Missing Adult Alert, the activating agency official will determine the area of coverage for the activation. Activations may cover a county, region, the state or multiple states.

In addition, the activating official shall:

- (a) Immediately enter Missing Adult Alert data into the LEADS/NCIC database with the appropriate code. An in-state alert message will automatically be generated to the following:
 1. Adjacent counties
 2. Ohio State Highway Patrol Central Dispatch Communications Center in Columbus
 3. Ohio Attorney General's Office
 4. Ohio media
- (b) Use the NLETS Missing Adult Alert screen in LEADS to send a broadcast message to law enforcement in adjacent states when necessary.
- (c) If access to the LEADS/NCIC computer system is unavailable, contact the Ohio State Highway Patrol for assistance with activation of a Missing Adult Alert.

To aid in this process, it is imperative that the activating official be notified of all relevant updates regarding the case investigation that may require modification or termination of the Missing Adult Alert system.

317.6 BLUE ALERTS

The Blue Alert Program is a statewide system to be utilized for the rapid dissemination of information to assist in the apprehension of persons suspected of killing or seriously injuring law enforcement officers and to aid in the location of missing law enforcement officers (ORC § 5502.53).

317.6.1 CRITERIA

A Blue Alert shall be activated if both of the following criteria exist (ORC § 5502.53):

- (a) The Department confirms that an officer has been seriously injured or killed, and a suspect has not been apprehended, or that an officer is missing while on-duty under circumstances warranting concern for the officer's safety.
- (b) There is sufficient descriptive information about the suspect or the circumstances surrounding an officer's injury, death, or disappearance to indicate that activation of a Blue Alert may help locate a suspect or the missing officer.

317.6.2 PROCEDURE

Upon receiving and verifying that the criteria for a Blue Alert have been met, the appropriate area of coverage for the activation should be determined. Activations may cover a county, region, state, or multiple states.

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In addition, the activating official shall:

- (a) Immediately enter Blue Alert data into the LEADS/NCIC database with the appropriate code. An in-state Blue Alert message will automatically be generated to the following:
 - 1. Adjacent counties
 - 2. Ohio State Highway Patrol Central Dispatch Communications Center in Columbus
 - 3. Ohio Attorney General's Office
 - 4. Ohio media
- (b) Use the NLETS Blue Alert screen in LEADS to send a broadcast message to law enforcement in adjacent states when necessary.
- (c) If access to the LEADS/NCIC computer system is unavailable, contact the Ohio State Highway Patrol for assistance with activation of a Blue Alert.

To aid in this process, it is imperative that the activating official be notified of all relevant updates regarding the case investigation that may require modification or termination of the Blue Alert.

317.7 MEDIA ALERTS

Regardless of whether a public alert is activated, the following procedures to alert the media and other local law enforcement agencies should be followed:

- (a) The PIO will prepare an initial press release that includes all available information that might aid in locating a child, suspect, or missing person, such as:
 - 1. The person's identity, age, and description.
 - 2. A photograph, if available.
 - 3. Pertinent vehicle description.
 - 4. Details regarding the location of the incident, last known direction of travel, and potential destinations, if known.
 - 5. The name and contact number of the PIO or other authorized media liaison.
 - 6. A contact number for the public to call with leads or information.
- (b) The press release should be faxed to local television and radio stations.
- (c) The information in the press release should also be forwarded to local law enforcement agencies.
- (d) The activating official or other individual responsible for making notifications shall prepare and fax to the previously described locations, follow-up press releases with updates regarding the search and investigation or immediately upon locating the person identified in the public alert.