



Approved:
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Subject:

641. Public Alerts

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Page:
1

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641.1: 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.

641.2: POLICY

It is the policy of the Albany Police Department to issue public alerts using the the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Amber Alerts, electronic notification systems such as Linn-Benton Alerts and Nixle, local radio, press organizations, social media, 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.

641.3: RESPONSIBILITIES

641.3.1: EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees of the Albany Police Department should notify their supervisor, Shift Supervisor or Detective Unit Supervisor as soon as practical 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.

641.3.2: SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. A supervisor apprised of the need for a public alert is responsible to make the appropriate notifications based upon the circumstances of each situation.
- b. The supervisor shall promptly notify the Chief of Police, the appropriate Division Captain and the Public Information Officer when any public alert is generated using the AMBER Alert System, Linn-Benton Alerts, or the "Alert" feature of Nixle.
- c. The supervisor in charge of the investigation to which the alert relates is responsible for ensuring alerts are updated and/or canceled as appropriate.

641.4: AMBER ALERTS

The Oregon AMBER Alert is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement agencies and local broadcasters to rapidly disseminate an emergency alert to the public when a child is abducted under emergency circumstances and the child may be in danger of serious bodily harm or death.

641.4.1: CRITERIA

- a. All of the following criteria must be met before an AMBER Alert will be issued:
 - 1) There is confirmation that a child abduction has occurred;
 - 2) The child is under 18 years of age;
 - 3) The child may be in danger of serious injury or death;
 - 4) There is sufficient descriptive information about the child, abductor and/or the suspect's vehicle to believe that an immediate broadcast alert will help.
 - 5) The child's name and other critical data elements, including the child abduction (CA) and AMBER Alert (AA) flags, either have been or will be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system.
- b. An AMBER Alert should not be used if the child is a runaway or has been abducted as a result of a child custody situation, unless the child may be in danger of serious bodily harm or death.

641.4.2: PROCEDURE

- a. If the involved supervisor determines that an AMBER Alert should be requested, a call should be made to the Oregon State Police Northern Command Center at (503) 375-3555 to initiate the request.
 - 1) Additional AMBER Alert procedure information can be found at the [Oregon State Police Amber Alert website](#).
- b. Because AMBER Alerts generate significant public and media interest, consideration should be given to ensuring adequate staffing for the tip line, 9-1-1 lines and any media line prior to posting the AMBER Alert message.
 - 1) Reassigning personnel from other units or requesting mutual aid from other agencies should be considered.
- c. The Public Information Officer, Shift Supervisor, Watch Supervisor, or Operations Division Captain should consider whether to prepare a press release that includes all available information which might aid in locating the child, such as:
 - 1) The child's identity, age, physical and clothing description, including any distinguishing

characteristics;

- 2) Photograph, if available;
 - 3) The location where the abduction occurred or where the child was last seen;
 - 4) The suspect's identity, age, physical and clothing description, if known;
 - 5) Pertinent vehicle license number and description, if known;
 - 6) Detail regarding direction of travel and potential destinations, if known;
 - 7) Contact information for the Public Information Officer or other authorized individual to handle media liaison;
 - 8) A telephone number for the public to call with leads or information.
- d. Information on the abducted child, suspect vehicle and suspect should be entered into the Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS) and NCIC as soon as practical.
- 1) The suspect's name, if known, should be entered in the "AKA" moniker field.
 - 2) The child's name and other critical data elements, including the child abduction (CA) and AMBER Alert (AA) flags, must be entered into the NCIC system in order to trigger the resources of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the FBI.
- e. The Communication Center Section will send a statewide Administrative Message (AM) via LEDS with the information. The text of the message will begin with the words, "Oregon AMBER Alert."
- f. The information in the press release should also be forwarded to the Communication Center so that general broadcasts can be made to local law enforcement agencies.
- g. Consideration should be given to whether to utilize the resources of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and/or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (1-800-843-5678).
- h. The FBI and NCMEC will have received notification of the AMBER Alert via the NCIC computer entries.
- i. If needed, the Oregon State Police Missing Children Clearinghouse is available to assist agencies with any additional notifications or to serve as the liaison with NCMEC.

641.5: LINN-BENTON ALERTS

The Linn-Benton Alert system is a complex reverse 911 software program which is capable of initiating thousands of phone calls, e-mails, and text alerts to the public registered within Linn and Benton Counties in only a matter of minutes.

641.5.1: CRITERIA

[ORS 403.135](#) limits the use of the Linn-Benton Alert database to emergency notifications only. Some criteria

that should be considered before activating the system include:

- a. Severity: Is there significant threat to one or more individual's life or safety?
- b. Public Protection: Is there a need for members of the public to take a protective action in order to reduce loss of life or substantial loss of property?
- c. Warning. Will providing warning information assist members of the public in making the decision to take proper and prudent actions to increase safety?
- d. Timing. Does the situation require immediate public knowledge in order to avoid adverse impact to life or safety?
- e. Geographic Area. Is the situation limited to a defined geographic area?
- f. Other means of communication. Are other means of disseminating the information inadequate to ensure proper and timely delivery of the information? (e.g. Would a press release suffice?)

641.5.2: AUTHORIZATION

- a. Prior to the Linn-Benton Alert System being utilized, approval must be received from a Lieutenant, Captain, or the Chief of Police.
- b. Once approval is given, the approving supervisor shall contact the Linn County Sheriff's Communication Center for issuance of the alert.

641.5.3: QUALIFYING EMERGENCIES

- a. Consideration should be given to the audience that requires receipt of the message and the message should be initiated only to that populous sector (i.e. only the neighborhood affected by the flooding needs to receive the evacuation information).
- b. Emergency situations requiring public emergency notification may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1) Natural disasters (e.g., fires, flooding, earthquake);
 - 2) Man-made disasters (e.g., bomb threats, hazardous materials);
 - 3) Criminal situations (e.g., fugitive, active threat to society, terrorist activity);
 - 4) Search and Rescue (e.g., missing children, endangered missing adults);
 - 5) Public health alerts (e.g., boil water alerts, rabid animal alerts, contagious disease outbreaks)
 - 6) Evacuation and shelter information (e.g., emergency health center locations, shelter-in-place details, emergency warming/cooling center locations, emergency food distribution information,

evacuation routes and transportation information).

641.6: NIXLE PUBLIC ALERTS

Nixle is a public notification system using SMS messages, email, Twitter, and Facebook for subscribed users.

a. Nixle messages fall into three categories:

- 1) **Alert** – An *emergency* notification such as: an evacuation, shelter in place order, and special instructions essential for public safety of which timely notification is essential. * Alerts extend beyond our jurisdiction and subscribers and should only be utilized under extreme circumstances.
- 2) **Advisory** – An urgent notification, such as: wanted subjects, missing persons, unplanned road closures and sudden, significant events.
- 3) **Community** – A notification of a non-urgent variety, such as: planned road closures, media releases, and community outreach bulletins.

b. The Albany Police Department should, whenever practical, utilize Nixle for public notifications in matters concerning public safety, urgent advisories and information such as media releases.

641.6.1: PROCEDURE

a. Emergency Notifications - "Alerts"

- 1) Primary responsibility for emergency notifications will be the Shift Supervisor.
- 2) Because "Alert" messages are only used in the most serious situations, consideration should be given to ensuring the placement of adequate resources in the Communications Center to handle calls generated by the alert.
- 3) "Alerts" should clearly specify the affected area.
- 4) "Alerts" shall be sent via SMS and web/e-mail message.
- 5) "Alerts" should also be posted to Twitter and Facebook via Nixle.
- 6) "Alert" messages must be approved by a supervisor.

b. Urgent Notifications – "Advisory"

- 1) Primary responsibility for emergency notifications will be a trained member of the department.
- 2) "Advisory" notifications should clearly specify the affected area.
- 3) "Advisory" notifications shall be sent via SMS and web/e-mail message.

- 4) "Advisory" notifications should also be posted to Twitter and Facebook via Nixle.
 - 5) When the situation which prompted the "Advisory" message is resolved, or conditions of the situation change, the "Advisory" message should be updated.
- c. Non-Urgent Notifications - "Community"
- 1) Primary responsibility for "Community" notifications will be the originator of the message.
 - 2) "Community" messages shall be sent via e-mail/web message only.
 - 3) Consideration should be given to publishing the message to Twitter and Facebook via Nixle.