


<p>Billerica Police Department</p> 	<p>POLICY NUMBER SPE-08</p>	<p>PAGES 5</p>	<p>EFFECTIVE 5/31/16</p>
<p>Accreditation Standards: 41.2.6(d)</p> <p>General Orders:</p>			
<p>Amber Alert System</p>			

I. Policy

It is the policy of the Billerica Police Department to initiate an Amber Alert for serious cases of child abduction, where the child’s life is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death and specific criteria supporting the Amber Alert Activation have been met.

II. Criteria [41.2.6(d)]

A. Although each case has its own set of circumstances, law enforcement agencies must follow the activation criteria as closely as possible.

1. A child, 17 years of age or younger has been abducted;
2. Police must believe the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death, and;
3. There is enough descriptive information for the 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. The plan should not be used for runaways. Also, while each case must be judged individually, most “child custody” situations do not meet the criteria.

III. Activation Procedures, Duties and Responsibilities

The table below shows the activation procedures duties/responsibilities for the responding officer, dispatcher, and commanding officer in a case of serious child abduction.

Position	Responsibilities
Primary or Secondary Jurisdiction Responding Officer	<p>The responding officer to a scene of a possible child abduction shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an initial scene assessment to determine if the Amber Alert Criteria has been met; • Verify witnesses' observation to the abduction; • Verify with the witnesses the actual time of the child's abduction; • Notify the dispatcher and/or desk officer with specific information and request an immediate Amber Alert Activation; and • Remain at the scene until properly released or relieved

Position	Responsibilities
Dispatcher or Desk Officer	<p>On receiving a request for an Amber Alert Activation, immediately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify the commanding officer of an Amber Alert request; • Ensure specific information for the Amber Alert is conveyed; • Dispatch area patrols as appropriate; and • Broadcast specific information over radio communications –“BOLO”
OIC	<p>The commanding officer shall immediately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Massachusetts Amber Alert Activation Form; • Telephone and fax the Massachusetts Amber Alert Activation Form to the Massachusetts State Police General Headquarters Communication Section OIC; • Dispatch a supervisor to the scene of the abduction; and • Notify the Chief of Police

IV. Overview

Under the Amber Alert 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.

See “**Activation Request**” form in the “Forms” library on the intranet website.

During the summer of 2001, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) launched the “Amber Plan” – America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response initiative nationwide. The goal is to increase the chances of recovering abducted and endangered children. Three quarters of the children who are kidnapped and later found murdered were killed within the first three hours after being taken. In 1996, nine year old Amber Hagerman was abducted while playing near her home in Arlington, Texas, and later found murdered. Police officials and media outlets joined forces to provide timely information about the area child abductions to local listeners.

The Massachusetts Amber Alert Plan is a voluntary, cooperative effort involving the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, the Massachusetts State Police, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) 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.

V. Initial Investigation

- A. Local law enforcement officers or members of the Massachusetts State Police must conduct an initial investigation to be certain whether the criteria for activation of the Amber Alert are met.

VI. Requesting Activation

- A. Where the three criteria are met, the chief or the shift commander may decide to submit an Amber Alert Activation Request
- B. It is important for everyone 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 may be submitted orally by phone to the Massachusetts State Police Communications Section (Comm Sec) by calling 508-820-2121 and by faxing the completed Activation Request form to Comm Sec at 508-820-2150 followed by a phone call to confirm they received the fax. Officers calling by phone should be prepared to furnish as much information shown on the form as possible and should promptly complete and fax the form as well.
- D. A recent photograph of the abducted child and the suspect, if available, should be obtained and forwarded to State Police Communications Center, preferably in electronic format (especially if a scanner is available).
- E. Upon receipt of the Activation Request, MSP Comm Sec will immediately notify an on-call Major, known as the Amber Alert Activation Officer, providing him/her with the information received. The Major will then:
 - 1. Verify the information by calling the requesting police agency or State Police troop;
 - 2. Determine if the information satisfies the three Amber Alert Criteria; and either:

- a. Activate the Alert, or
- b. Decline the Activation Request, and
- c. Notify the requesting agency of his/her decision.

Note: Where a request is denied, the police are still free to contact the media directly. In such cases the media may treat it as a news item or decide on case by case basis to broaden an alert

VII. Alert Dissemination

- A. The State Police Communications Section will work with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency to disseminate a broadcast (voice and/or text) over the Emergency Broadcast Network. This involves tape recording a message and sending it to two radio stations in Boston. The message is monitored by other stations and, after a series of such monitoring, it is picked up by stations across the state.
- B. The Billerica Police Department will make every effort to disseminate the alert through its own resources such as:
 1. CodeRED
 2. Website
 3. Social Media
 4. Billerica Access Television
- C. Where an abduction takes place near a state border, or where there is reason to believe the suspect will flee the state, consideration should be given to notifying the New England States Police Network (NESPN) so that police agencies in other states will be on the lookout for the parties.
- D. Stations that decide to do so will likely interrupt their regular broadcasting to air the Amber Alert. It is expected that this will take place every 30 minutes for the first 4 hours unless the Alert is terminated.
- E. Cable and television stations that decide to participate are more likely to broadcast a text message.

VIII. Termination

- A. The State Police Communications Section should be notified when an abducted child is recovered or found. The Alert Activation Officer (Major) must take appropriate steps to cancel the alert and arrange to have the broadcasters so notified.

IX. Guidelines

- A. An Amber Alert should only be issued for serious 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 (e.g., if a parent threatened to harm the child and this information can be verified). Each case will need to be judged on an individual basis.

***Examples of
circumstances to activate
Amber Alert***

Circumstances where an Amber Alert would be activated include:

- Child is abducted and there are witnesses to the crime.
- Child is missing and there is evidence of foul play, and law enforcement believes the child was abducted.
- Vehicle was stolen or “carjacked” and a child was left inside the vehicle.
- 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.

***Examples of
circumstances not to
activate
Amber Alert***

Circumstances where an Amber Alert would not be activated:

- Child is missing and law enforcement has no evidence of foul play.
- Child runs away from home.
- 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.
- An adult is missing.

Note: Should any of the above “non-activation circumstances occur, law enforcement may alert the media to these cases by utilizing the standard protocol for such cases.