

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

Approved By: Geoffrey Jones Chief of Police

CALEA 6th Edition Standard: 41.2.5; 41.2.6

332 MISSING PERSONS

332.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines and procedures for the investigation and reporting of missing persons, to include guidelines and requirements for the activation of an A.M.B.E.R. alert or Endangered SILVER Advisory.

332.2 POLICY (41.2.6 a)

It is the policy of the Columbia Police Department to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons. This Department holds that every child and vulnerable adult reported missing will be considered “at risk” until significant information indicates otherwise. The Department is dedicated to the protection and recovery of missing, abused and/or exploited children and at-risk adults. Equally, the Department will assure safe haven and the protection of the law for unidentified and/or abandoned children and vulnerable adults. The Columbia Police Department does not require a specific amount of time to have passed before beginning a missing person investigation.

332.3 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

A.M.B.E.R. Alert: An acronym for America’s Missing Broadcasting Emergency Response.

At risk: Includes persons who:

- A. Are 13 years of age or younger; or
- B. Regardless of age, are believed or determined to be experiencing one or more of the following circumstances.
 1. Out of the zone of safety for his/her chronological age and developmental stage.
 2. Physically or mentally disabled to the degree that he/she is dependent upon an agency or another individual (§ 43.400, RSMo).
 3. Drug dependent, including dependence on prescribed medication and/or illegal substances, and the dependence is potentially life-threatening.
 4. Absent from home for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing.
 5. In a life-threatening situation or missing under circumstances indicating that the person’s safety may be in danger (§ 43.400, RSMo).
 6. In the company of others who could endanger his/her welfare.
 7. Absent in a way that is inconsistent with established patterns of behavior and cannot be readily explained.
 8. A child missing under circumstances indicating that he/she is in the presence of, or under the control of, a person who is in violation of a permanent or temporary court order and either:

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

- a. Fourteen or more days have elapsed without the person seeking modification of the court order; or
 - b. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the child may be taken outside of the United States (§ 43.400, RSMo).
9. Involved in a situation that would cause a reasonable person to conclude the person should be considered at risk.

C.A.R.T.: Child Abduction Response Team.

Endangered SILVER Advisory: The Endangered SILVER Advisory is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement and local broadcasters to rapidly disseminate information about a missing and endangered adult to law enforcement agencies, broadcasters and the public.

Missing person: Any person who is reported missing to law enforcement when that person's location is unknown.

Missing person networks: Databases or computer networks that are available to law enforcement and are suitable for obtaining information related to missing person investigations. This includes the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System (MULES).

Runaway: Under Missouri law, a minor that runs away from their parents', legal guardians', or custodians' home without parental authority is considered a runaway. Once the minor leaves home, their parents, guardian or custodian can call the police and report them missing. While running away is not necessarily a criminal act, it is considered a status offense, which is a violation of the juvenile code which, if that same act were committed by an adult, would not be a violation of the law.

332.4 PROCEDURES

332.4.1 ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS (41.2.6 b, and e)

Any Department employee encountering a person who wishes to report a missing person or runaway shall render assistance without delay. This can be accomplished by accepting the report via telephone or in-person and initiating the investigation. Those members who do not take such reports or who are unable to give immediate assistance shall promptly dispatch or alert a member who can take the report.

A report shall be accepted in all cases and regardless of where the person was last seen, where the person resides or any question of jurisdiction.

In the event the missing person is a juvenile or an adult with diminishing capacity, the report will immediately be assigned to an officer and the officer shall make sure an on-duty supervisor is aware.

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

332.4.2 GENERAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS (§ 43.401, RSMo) (41.2.5 a, b, c, g) (41.2.6 c, e)

- A. A person may file a complaint/report of a missing person with a law enforcement agency having jurisdiction. The complaint/report shall include, but need not be limited to, the following information:
 - 1. The name of the complainant;
 - 2. The name, address and phone number of the guardian, if any, of the missing person;
 - 3. The relationship of the complainant to the missing person;
 - 4. The name, age, address and all identifying characteristics of the missing person;
 - 5. The length of time the person has been missing; and
 - 6. All other information deemed relevant by either the complainant or officer.
- B. A report of the complaint of a missing person shall be immediately entered into the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System (MULES) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system by the law enforcement agency receiving the complaint and disseminated to other law enforcement agencies who may come in contact with or be involved in the investigation or location of a missing person.
- C. A law enforcement agency with which a complaint of a missing child has been filed shall prepare, as soon as practicable, a standard missing child report. The missing child report shall be maintained as a record by the reporting law enforcement agency during the course of an active investigation.
- D. Upon the location of a missing person, or the determination by the law enforcement agency of jurisdiction that the person is no longer missing, the law enforcement agency that reported the missing person shall immediately remove the record of the missing person from the MULES and NCIC files.

No law enforcement agency shall prevent an immediate active investigation on the basis of an agency rule which specifies an automatic time limitation for a missing person investigation.

For all reports involving a missing child, Department personnel shall request that a member of the family or next of kin authorize the release of the medical and dental records of the missing child for analysis by the Missouri State Highway Patrol (§ 43.410.4, RSMo).

332.4.3 MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATION AND REPORTING PROCEDURE (41.2.5 a, b, c, d, e, f, g)

In addition to the General Reporting Requirements, officers responding to a missing person report will obtain all necessary information and adhere to the following procedures regarding the investigation and reporting of missing or abducted adults, children, at-risk individuals and runaway juveniles.

- A. In-person contact with the complainant is the preferred method to conduct a missing person investigation. If circumstances exist making in-person contact unreasonable at the time, the reporting officer may take the initial report via telephone.
- B. Officers arriving on scene or making contact with the complainant via telephone will obtain all necessary information to include, but not limited to, the following.

MISSING PERSONS

1. The circumstances regarding the missing person to include:
 - a. Missing - lost/separated/abandoned/deserted;
 - b. Abducted – taken by family/non-family;
 - c. Runaway – voluntary separation from location.
2. If a child, confirm the child's custody status, *e.g.*, have there been any custody disputes.
3. If the missing person is a child or adult with diminished capacity, identify the person's zone of safety for his/her age, developmental stage and physical and mental state.
4. Make a determination of at-risk factors and choose the appropriate response.
5. Notify an on-duty supervisor if one is not already aware. Depending on the circumstances, the supervisor may begin making arrangements for support services such as CID, K-9s, air support (drone), additional officers or, if circumstances dictate, the activation of alert systems.
6. Obtain a full description and pedigree information for the missing person to include the following.
 - a. Name, date of birth/age, Social Security number if known, driver's license number.
 - b. Place of birth.
 - c. Height, weight, color of hair and eyes.
 - d. Use of eyeglasses or contacts.
 - e. Race/skin color.
 - f. Physical or mental disability.
 - g. Scars, marks or tattoos.
 - h. Detailed description of clothing.
 - i. Recent photographs.
 - j. Names and addresses of parents and relatives.
 - k. Nicknames.
 - l. Names and addresses of friends.
 - m. School attending.
 - n. Locations frequented.
 - o. Determine if dental records are available.
 - p. Determine if fingerprints are available.
 - q. Vehicle information.
 - r. Any other information believed pertinent by the complainant or investigating officer.
- C. Verify the person is missing. Conduct a thorough search of all possible areas as circumstances dictate. If a child, conduct a thorough search of the home and/or the last place seen to include any area a child may fit or become trapped;
- D. Search other areas the person is known to frequent.
- E. Contact known friends, acquaintances and/or relatives the person is likely to contact.

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

- F. Identify and interview witnesses.
- G. Determine when, where and by whom the missing person was last seen to determine time frame, window of opportunity and verification of previously received information.
- H. Locate surveillance cameras in the area where person was last seen and view/preserve as appropriate.
- I. If applicable, obtain a description of the suspected abductor(s) and other pertinent information.
- J. Contact Boone County Joint Communications with necessary BOLO information, to include a request to notify adjacent law enforcement agencies if circumstances dictate.
- K. Gather information regarding social media sites used by the missing person. If the missing person is a child, try to obtain usernames and passwords if possible.
- L. If circumstances dictate, secure and safeguard the area as a potential crime scene.
- M. Exhaust all available leads.
- N. As soon as possible, the reporting officer should complete a missing person report in the RMS to include:
 - 1. Initial report;
 - 2. MULES/NCIC entry form (delivered to front desk personnel for entry); and
 - 3. Preservation requests, as applicable, for social media sites.
- O. Front desk personnel receiving the MULES/NCIC information form will promptly enter the information into the computer system for dissemination.
- P. The reporting officer will ensure pertinent information is relayed to oncoming shifts so continued efforts can be made to locate the missing person.
- Q. Unless the investigation has been reassigned to CID, the reporting officer should conduct follow-up with the complainant and make reasonable efforts to obtain additional information that may assist in the investigation.

332.5 FOLLOW-UP/INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES (41.2.5 e, f; 41.2.6 e, f)

- A. Obtain a briefing from agency personnel at the scene.
- B. Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information.
- C. Conduct a neighborhood investigation.
- D. Obtain a brief history of recent family dynamics.
- E. Explore the basis for conflicting information.
- F. Implement effective case management.
- G. Evaluate the need for additional resources and specialized services.
- H. Update descriptive information.
- I. Monitor media relations.

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

332.6 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The supervisor shall obtain a briefing, review the missing person information and ensure resources are deployed as appropriate, initiating a command post as needed.
- B. The supervisor shall ensure applicable notifications and public alerts (AMBER Alert or SILVER Advisory) are made and documented and that records have been entered into the appropriate missing person networks.
- C. The supervisor should take reasonable steps to identify and address any jurisdictional issues to ensure cooperation among agencies. If the case falls within the jurisdiction of another agency, the supervisor should facilitate transfer of the case to the agency of jurisdiction.
- D. Organize and coordinate search efforts using resources from CFD, MSHP, pre-determined and organized volunteer groups.
- E. Ensure all required notifications have been made which may include:
 - 1. All officers and appropriate command level personnel, depending on the circumstances;
 - 2. C.A.R.T., if established and applicable;
 - 3. Other departments and agencies in close proximity;
 - 4. All investigative networks; and
 - 5. If necessary, contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.
- F. Establish a liaison with the victim's family.
- G. Confirm that all agency policies and procedures are observed.
- H. Manage media relations until relieved by PIO.
- I. Data entry completed on the Missing/Abducted/Runaway board. (Runaway information is optional dependent on "at-risk" factors present.)

332.7 EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEMS

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.

Members of the Columbia Police Department should notify their supervisor, Watch Commander or Investigation Unit Supervisor 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.

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 their Watch Commander or Bureau Commander who, in turn, will notify the Chief of Police. The Public Information Officer will be notified when any public alert is generated.

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

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

1. Updating alerts;
2. Canceling alerts;
3. Ensuring all appropriate reports are completed; and
4. Preparing an after-action evaluation of the investigation to be forwarded to the Bureau Commander

332.7.1 MISSOURI AMBER™ ALERTS

The mission of the AMBER Alert Program is to develop and coordinate the efforts of law enforcement, the media and transportation in order to increase public participation in safely recovering abducted children through targeted education, increased communication and effective sharing of resources. In the event of a suspected child abduction, a local AMBER Alert should be generated first and, if the facts warrant, the alert should be expanded beyond the local plan to a Missouri AMBER Alert.

A. CRITERIA FOR AMBER ALERT (41.2.5 d)

The responsibility for the activation of an AMBER Alert rests solely with the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction in the case. Nothing contained herein shall be construed as a requirement for law enforcement to activate an alert, nor to infringe upon the discretion of a broadcaster concerning the broadcast of an alert. A Missouri AMBER Alert is warranted when (11 CSR 30-10.020; § 210.1012, RSMo):

1. Law enforcement officials have a reasonable belief that an abduction has occurred, which meets the definition in §565.110 (Kidnapping) or §565.115, RSMo (Child Kidnapping).
2. Law enforcement officials believe there is a credible threat of serious bodily injury or death to the victim.
3. Enough descriptive information exists about the victim and the abductor for law enforcement to issue an AMBER Alert.
4. The victim of the abduction is a child age 17 years or younger.
5. The child's name and other critical data elements - including the child abduction (CA) flag - have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Parental disputes do not apply unless a possibility of harm to the child has been determined. Missouri AMBER Alert activation should not be requested for events not meeting the criteria listed above. Events not meeting these criteria may be addressed through local alerts, Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System and National Crime Information Center entries, assistance from national (NCMEC) and state (Missouri State Highway Patrol) entities and standard press releases.

The AMBER Alert request needs to be timely. Elapsed time from the incident directly diminishes the usefulness of an alert.

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

B. ACTIVATION PROCEDURE

1. If the supervisor in charge believes the incident meets the above criteria, the supervisor should contact the Missouri State Highway Patrol Troop F Headquarters at 573-751-1000 and request an AMBER Alert. Troop F Communications will contact the state AMBER Alert coordinator or their designee and initiate a conference call between a representative from our Department, Troop F Communications and the coordinator or designee. After a brief discussion regarding the abduction and each criteria section, the coordinator or designee will decide if the situation rises to the level of an AMBER Alert. If the decision is made to activate the AMBER Alert system, Troop F Communications will take the abduction information over the telephone from our agency representative and start the process to activate the alert.
2. The supervisor in charge must ensure a Missing Person computer entry in MULES is completed as required in the National Child Search Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5779, 5780).
3. The supervisor in charge shall ensure the Amber Alert Request Form (AMBER) in MULES 5 is completed. This form sends a message via MULES to Troop F Communications to notify them of the pending AMBER Alert request. If assistance filling out the AMBER form is needed, Troop F Communications can assist.
4. If we do not have access to the Amber Alert request form in MULES 5, complete a [Missouri Amber Alert Abduction Form](#) on the Missouri State Highway Patrol website. This form can be emailed to moalerts@mshp.dps.mo.gov, or faxed to the Missouri State Highway Patrol Troop F Headquarters at 573-751-6814. Contact Troop F Communications at 573-751-1000 to verify the email/fax was received. Troop F Communications will then disseminate the alert.

332.7.2 ENDANGERED SILVER ADVISORY

The Endangered SILVER Advisory is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement and local broadcasters to rapidly disseminate information about a missing and endangered adult to law enforcement agencies, broadcasters and the public.

A. CRITERIA FOR ENDANGERED SILVER ADVISORY

A Missouri Endangered SILVER Advisory is warranted when:

1. The person is 60 years of age or older and believed to be suffering from dementia or other cognitive impairment;
2. A legal custodian of the missing person has submitted a missing person report to the local law enforcement agency where the person went missing; and
3. There is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the missing adult.

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

B. ACTIVATION PROCEDURE ENDANGERED SILVER ADVISORY

The supervisor in charge shall ensure that the following is completed:

1. If all criteria exist, an NCIC message is created using the Endangered Missing (EME) code on the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System (MULES).
2. Email (moalerts@mshp.dps.mo.gov) or fax (573-751-6814) the Endangered Silver Advisory (ESA) form with the attachments such as photographs, area maps, etc. to the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Troop F Headquarters. Email is the preferred method to receive the forms.
3. Contact the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Troop F Headquarters at 573-751-1000 to verify the emailed or faxed forms and attachments have been received.
4. Make sure dispatchers or call takers are prepared to handle phone calls. Consider allocating additional resources from other law enforcement agencies.
5. A public information officer (PIO) should be appointed to handle the media. The PIO should be constantly updated to utilize the media as much as possible and receive the maximum exposure for the case.

C. THE FOLLOWING WILL OCCUR WHEN AN ENDANGERED SILVER ADVISORY IS ACTIVATED

An Endangered SILVER Advisory accomplishes the following.

1. All Missouri law enforcement agencies are notified through MULES and Missouri Information Analysis Center (MIAC) e-mail alert.
2. Broadcasters and media are notified.
3. The MSHP Missing Persons Unit will be notified for support and resources.
4. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Hotline will be notified.
5. The Missouri Department of Transportation will be notified to activate message signs, if practicable.

332.7.3 ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY

The Endangered Person Advisory is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement and local broadcasters to rapidly disseminate information about a missing and endangered person to law enforcement agencies, broadcasters and the public.

A. CRITERIA FOR ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY

A Missouri Endangered Person Advisory is warranted when:

1. The circumstances fail to meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert (but if they do meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert, immediately follow the protocol to issue an AMBER Alert);
2. The person is missing under unexplained, involuntary or suspicious circumstances;

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

3. The person is believed to be in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, environment or weather conditions, in the company of a potentially dangerous person or some other factor that may put the person in peril; and
4. Information exists that could assist the public in the safe recovery of the missing person.

B. ACTIVATION PROCEDURE ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY

The supervisor in charge shall ensure that the following is completed.

1. If all criteria exist, prepare the "Endangered Person Advisory" by using the Endangered Missing (EME) code on the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System (MULES).
2. Email (moalerts@mshp.dps.mo.gov) or fax (573-751-6814) the Endangered Person Advisory (EPA) form with the attachments such as photographs, area maps, etc. to the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Troop F Headquarters. Email is the preferred method to receive the forms.
3. Contact the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Troop F Headquarters at (573) 751-1000 to verify the emailed or faxed forms and attachments have been received.
4. Make sure dispatchers or call takers are prepared to handle phone calls. Consider allocating additional resources from other law enforcement agencies.
5. A Public Information Officer (PIO) should be appointed to handle the media. The PIO should be constantly updated to utilize the media as much as possible and receive the maximum exposure for the case.

C. THE FOLLOWING WILL OCCUR WHEN AN ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY IS ACTIVATED

1. All affected Missouri law enforcement agencies are notified through MIAC e-mail alert.
2. Broadcasters and media are notified by media advisory.
3. The MSHP Missing Persons Unit will be notified for support and resources.
4. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) is contacted if the person is under the age of 18 or if they are 18-20 years old and considered a critically missing young adult.

332.7.4 CANCELING AN ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY, SILVER ADVISORY OR AMBER ALERT

Mark the appropriate form with "Cancellation" and provide a brief description of the recovery details in the "Brief Circumstances" box. Email (moalerts@mshp.dps.mo.gov) or fax (573-751-6814) the form to the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Troop F Headquarters. The agency must also call the Missouri State Highway Patrol's Troop F Headquarters at 573-751-1000 to verify the form was received.

332.8 PROCEDURE FOR RECOVERY OR RETURN OF MISSING PERSON OR RUNAWAY JUVENILE

An officer assigned to the recovery of or who locates a missing person shall be responsible for the following.

- A. Confirm by in-person contact that the person has been located and verify identity.

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

- B. If the located person is a missing/runaway child from our jurisdiction, assess the safety and well-being of the child and arrange the release of the child to the appropriate parent or guardian after coordination with the Juvenile Office.
- C. If a missing person from our jurisdiction is located outside our jurisdiction, request that a law enforcement officer from the locating jurisdiction verify the identity of the missing person. If a child, coordinate the release with the Juvenile Office and the locating agency.
- D. If a missing/runaway child from another jurisdiction or state is located in our jurisdiction, the officer should confirm the child's wanted status or missing person status, take the juvenile into custody and transport to a facility as determined through coordination with the Juvenile Office.
- E. If applicable, obtain information regarding possible predators, suspects and other pertinent information for the investigation.
- F. If foul play was involved, notify an on-duty supervisor and take steps to identify and preserve potential evidence.
- G. Once the located person's status and identity have been confirmed, the officer shall do the following.
 - 1. Complete a supplemental report that includes, at a minimum:
 - a. The location where the person was found;
 - b. Name of the person verifying the found person's status and identity;
 - c. To whom the missing person was released, if applicable;
 - d. The person's activities while missing, circumstances of the recovery or return and any other information pertinent to the investigation.
 - 2. Provide front desk personnel a MULES/NCIC removal form; and
 - 3. Cancel all outstanding alerts, notifications and BOLO's.

If a case involves the voluntary disappearance by an adult, the adult's whereabouts cannot be released without the permission of the located adult. The complainant may be notified that the missing person has been located but declines to release their whereabouts.

332.9 PROCEDURE ABANDONED CHILD/UNIDENTIFIED PERSON

When an employee of this Department encounters a lost/abandoned child, an unidentified person who is deceased or a living person who cannot assist in identifying him/herself, the following general procedure should be followed.

- A. Obtain a complete description.
- B. Notify a patrol shift supervisor.
- C. Enter the unidentified child's description into the NCIC Unidentified Person File.
- D. Utilize all available resources to aid in identification of the child, to include:

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSONS

1. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children;
2. State of Missouri missing children's clearinghouse;
3. Local hospitals;
4. Medical Examiner's Office;
5. NCIC;
6. MULES.
7. Appropriate news media and social media outlets.