



Graham Police Department

Standard Operating Policies and Procedures

Policy 30 Missing Persons

POLICY

It is the policy of the Graham Police Department to respond to and diligently investigate all reports of missing persons within the jurisdiction of this Department.

PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for police department employees when handling reports of missing adults, missing children, runaways, abandoned children, abducted and other missing status children.

***NOTE:** Some updates to this policy reflect the provisions of ratified [NC House Bill 74 \(2025 Session\)](#). Updates may not yet appear in statutes online, so this link to the [bill](#) is provided for reference until the updated statutes are published.*

I. MISSING PERSONS IN GENERAL

A. *Description and Information to be Gathered*

When taking a missing person report there is initial description and information that shall be gathered. The information is the same regardless of age. The initial description and information to be gathered includes, but is not limited to;

1. Full Name
2. Race
3. Date and Place of Birth
4. Height
5. Weight
6. Eye and Hair Color
7. Skin tone
8. Scars, Marks, and Tattoos
9. Date and Time of Last Contact
10. Clothing Description
11. Items and money carried
12. Social Security Number
13. Driver's License or I.D. card information
14. Medical conditions / disabilities
15. Employment/School Information (if applicable)
16. Accompanying Persons (if applicable)
17. Vehicle Information (if applicable)

B. *Dissemination of Missing Persons Data*

Upon receipt of a missing person report by a parent, spouse, guardian, legal custodian, or person responsible for the supervision of the missing individual this agency shall immediately make arrangements for the entry of data about the missing person or missing child into the national missing persons file in accordance with the criteria set forth by the FBI/NCIC. The officer shall immediately inform all on-duty officers within the department of the missing person through radio broadcast and initiate a statewide broadcast to all appropriate law enforcement agencies to be on the lookout for the individual. There shall be no observance of any waiting period before accepting a missing person report. This conforms to [NCGS 143B-1015 \(becomes 143B-1765 in May 2025\)](#).

C. Entry of Information into the Criminal Justice Information System

1. All reported missing persons that meet the National Crime Information Center criteria for missing persons shall be entered into the NCIC missing persons file.
2. All missing persons under the age of 21 must be entered into NCIC within 2 hours of the time the agency has obtained the minimum mandatory data for the missing person. The time in which the minimum mandatory data is obtained by the officer shall be noted in the missing person report. It shall be the responsibility of the on-duty supervisor to see that this 2-hour time period requirement is met.
3. For entry into NCIC the missing person must fit into one of the following categories;
 - a. Disabled (MKE/EMD): A person of any age who is missing and under proven physical/mental disability thereby subjecting self or others to personal and immediate danger.
 - b. Endangered (MKE/EME): A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety may be in danger.
 - c. Involuntary (MKE/EMI): A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating disappearance may not have been voluntary, i.e., abduction or kidnapping.
 - d. Catastrophe victim (MKE/EMV): A person of any age who is missing after a catastrophe.
 - e. Other (MKE/EMO): A person not meeting the criteria for entry in any other category who is missing and
 - 1.) for whom there is a reasonable concern for his/her safety or
 - 2.) a person who is under age 21 and declared emancipated by the laws of his/her state of residence
 - f. Juvenile (MKE/EMJ): A person who is missing and not declared emancipated as defined by the laws of his/her state of residence and does not meet any if the entry criteria set forth in the Disabled, Endangered, Involuntary, or Catastrophe Victim categories.

D. Removal of Information from the Criminal Justice Information System

All persons reported missing and entered into the NCIC missing person file who are located or for some reason should have never been entered shall immediately be removed from the NCIC missing persons file.

E. *North Carolina Center for Missing Persons*

1. The N.C. Center for Missing Persons serves as the clearinghouse for information regarding missing children and adults. The Center is charged with all of the state's alerts. The Center consistently provides law enforcement with technical assistance and serving as liaison between states and various governmental agencies. The Center interacts with the public to assist with policy and procedures when reporting a loved one missing.
2. All alerts will be activated via the NC Center for Missing Persons website. All activations and deactivations are now automated via the website portal <http://nccmp.ncdps.gov>.
3. Silver and AMBER alerts are discussed in sections below.
4. [Blue Alert criteria](#) (becomes [143B-1773](#) in May 2025)
 - a. A law enforcement officer is killed or suffers serious bodily injury.
 - b. A law enforcement agency with jurisdiction
 - 1) determines that the suspect poses a threat to the public and other law enforcement personnel and
 - 2) possesses information that may assist in locating the suspect, including information regarding the suspect's vehicle, complete or partial license plate information, and a detailed description of the suspect, or that a law enforcement officer is missing while on duty under circumstances warranting concern for the law enforcement officer's safety.
 - c. The head of a law enforcement agency with jurisdiction recommends the issuance of a blue alert to the Center.
5. Ashanti Alert criteria (becomes [143B-1775](#) in May 2025):
 - a. Adult between the ages 18 and 64 has been identified as a missing individual,
 - b. Reported to law enforcement within a reasonable time
 - c. Evidence of physical endangerment, abduction or kidnapping
 - d. There is suspect and/or vehicle information available
6. Missing Endangered Alert criteria (becomes [143B-1774](#) in May 2025):
 - a. Diagnosed with, or suspected of, Alzheimer's, Dementia, or other Cognitive Impairment that causes an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties that makes them unable to meet their own needs or to seek help without assistance.
 - b. Reported Missing to law enforcement within 72 hours.
 - c. Person 0 to 64 years of age.

7. Missing-Weather Alert criteria (becomes [143B-1776](#) in May 2025):
 - a. Missing person or missing child that is missing during times of extreme heat or cold and is not in a vehicle; OR
 - b. Missing person immediately following a significant weather event.
8. Agency ORIs are required for access to the portals for alert activation. The DCI activation code for all alerts in DCI is “LYF5” and the DCI deactivation code for all alerts in DCI is “GFM6”. The phone number for the Center is 1-800-522-5437.

F. *Preliminary Reports*

All preliminary reports will be submitted before the end of tour of duty by the officer taking the report.

G. *Follow-up Contact with the Reporting Persons*

Contact with the reporting person(s) shall be made after 24 hours of the report and then at least every five days to determine if that person(s) has had any contact with the missing person, and to determine if the person is still missing. Reporting persons should be advised to contact the police department if they have any contact with the missing person or if the status of the missing person should change.

H. *Follow-up Investigation and Search*

A follow-up investigation shall be initiated immediately and any possible location of the missing person shall be searched for the presence of that person.

I. [North Carolina Silver Alert System](#)

1. [Silver Alert Activation](#)

Upon completion of a missing person report, the Supervisor will be contacted immediately to review and sign the report. The supervisor will then determine if the missing person meets the criteria to activate the Silver Alert. The reporting officer will hand carry a copy of the report to the DCI operator. All missing persons will be entered into DCI within two hours of receiving the reported activity.

The reviewing Supervisor will review the current Silver Alert Criteria and determine if the case meets the qualifying criteria. The [current statutory criteria](#) (becomes [143B-1772](#) in May 2025) must be met before the NC Center for Missing Persons will activate a Silver Alert:

- a. The person is believed to be missing and is aged 65 or older.
- b. The person is believed to be suffering from dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, or a cognitive impairment that causes an irreversible deterioration of

intellectual faculties that makes them unable to meet their own needs or to seek help without assistance.

- c. The person was reported missing to law enforcement within 72 hours.
2. If the above criteria are met, the investigating officer will verify the missing person details with the supervisor. The officer or supervisor will then contact the NC Center for Missing Persons to request a Silver Alert. The officer/supervisor will then send completed Silver Alert Forms to the center outlining necessary information about the missing person.
3. The Center and the agency will work together to notify the surrounding community about the missing person. The DCI Operator will immediately enter the information in accordance with DCI Transaction Procedures and [NCGS 143B-1015](#) (becomes [143B-1765](#) in May 2025).
4. Upon receiving a missing persons message via DCI or telephone call if DCI is down, the Communications Center will simulcast missing person information on all channels as quickly as possible after the message is received.

J. *Patrol Response to include Search*

1. Police personnel are initially assigned to conduct a preliminary investigation of a missing person.
2. When an officer arrives at the scene of a missing person call, the officer will request consent to search the victim's home and premises. If consent is obtained, the officer will conduct a thorough search of the victim's home and premises for the victim.
3. When an officer at the scene verifies that the missing person is a child, a mentally or physically challenged person, or an elderly person with serious medical problems, the officer will immediately notify his or her supervisor.
4. If the missing person may possibly still be in the vicinity of last known location, the Field Supervisor will:
 - a. Direct available patrol units to respond for an immediate ground search of the area.
 - b. Request that the Assistant Chief, the Administrator on call, and/or the Patrol Operations Commander be notified.
 - c. Determine if additional officers should be dispatched to assist.
 - d. Request investigative personnel, depending upon the age of the subject or other known circumstances at the time.
 - e. Ensure an immediate search is conducted with all available resources as practical.
 - f. Notify the chain of command.
 - g. Coordinate with all agencies involved.

5. The Supervisor will also refer all news media personnel to the Assistant Chief and/or the designated Public Information Officer, who will be responsible for all news media releases. When other public service agencies are involved in an incident, the department will attempt to coordinate a joint release of information.
6. Officers who locate a missing person or juvenile will either return the juvenile directly to his/her home or take the child to the Police Department, depending on the circumstances, such as age, and mental or physical condition. Officers will notify Communications, the complainant, his Supervisor and the Assistant Chief and/or Patrol Operations Commander.

II. MISSING CHILDREN

The purpose of this section of the policy is to establish policy and procedure for the handling of missing children to include; runaways, abandoned children, abducted and other missing status children. This section refers to any child under the age of 18.

A. *Description and Information to be Gathered by Call Taker*

When taking a report of a missing juvenile, in addition to the description and information to be gathered listed in the section on missing persons in general, the following information should also be obtained.

1. Time they were last seen
2. Any information indicating foul play
3. Past behavior and history
4. Known associates
5. Hangouts
6. Any other information that will be useful in locating them.

B. *Unusual Circumstances*

In unusual circumstances of a missing juvenile, cases of suspected foul play, abandonment or abduction, or cases of public interest the on-duty supervisor shall contact the Patrol Operations Commander and Assistant Chief and or the Administrator on call. The Assistant Chief and/or the Administrator on call shall be in charge of any special operations or special search operations that may be needed. Either initially or at a later date, at the discretion of the Assistant Chief, On-scene Administrator, or on-duty Supervisor, outside sources may be called to assist with any search. These agencies may include but are not limited to; Graham Fire Department, Alamance County Rescue, Alamance County Emergency Medical Services, North Carolina Highway Patrol, Alamance County Sheriff's Office, Special Search Groups, and others.

C. *Special Circumstances*

In addition to the Missing Persons Report, in matters concerning at-risk persons (mentally challenged, elderly, physically impaired, missing from a group home or rest

home) the preliminary investigating officer will exhaust all leads to include canvassing, contacting associates, family members, and sending out a broadcast. The preliminary investigating officer will notify his supervisor, who will make the determination that more resources are needed. If more resources are needed, he will then make contact with the on-call CID Investigator, the media or other emergency resources.

D. *Dissemination of Missing Juvenile Data*

The initial officer taking a missing juvenile report shall follow the same procedures as listed above under missing persons in general for the dissemination of missing persons' data. The missing juvenile information shall also be forwarded to shift briefing and CID for dissemination.

E. [North Carolina AMBER Alert System](#)

1. [AMBER Alert Activation](#)

Upon determining that a child has been **ABDUCTED**, **ALL** of the following criteria **MUST** apply for the "Amber Alert" to be activated:

- a. The child is 17 years of age or younger;
 - b. If abduction is suspected to be by a parent of the child, the child's life must be suspected to be in imminent danger of serious injury or death;
 - c. The child is believed:
 - 1) To have been abducted, and
 - 2) To be in danger of injury or death
 - d. The child is not a runaway or voluntarily missing
 - e. The abduction has been reported to and investigated by a law enforcement agency.
2. If the above-listed criteria are met, the investigating officer will verify the abduction details with his/her immediate supervisor. The investigation will include, but is not limited to, the following information:
- a. Name, age and physical description of the child
 - b. Description of the child's clothing
 - c. Location and time the child was last seen
 - d. Description of vehicle involved in the abduction
 - e. Last known direction of travel and possible destination
 - f. Description of suspect
 - g. A recent photograph of the abducted child
 - h. Name of school the child attends (if old enough) or last school attended
3. Upon completion of a child abduction incident report the Watch Commander/Supervisor will be contacted immediately to review and sign the report. The reporting officer will hand carry a copy of the report to the DCI

operator for entry into DCI as soon as possible after receiving the reported activity.

4. The DCI Operator will immediately enter the information in accordance with DCI Transaction Procedures and [NCGS 143B-1015](#) (becomes [143B-1765](#) in May 2025). The child will be entered into DCI as a missing person.
5. Upon receiving a missing persons message via DCI or telephone call if DCI is down, the Communications Center will simulcast child abduction information on all channels as quickly as possible after the message is received.

F. Entry of Information into the Criminal Justice Information System

The initial report taker will give the information to the on-duty supervisor to be entered into NCIC. This entry shall be done within two hours of the time in which the initial report taker has obtained the minimum mandatory data for the missing juvenile.

G. Removal of Information from the Criminal Justice Information System

All juveniles reported missing and entered into the NCIC missing person file who are located or for some reason should have never been entered shall immediately be removed from the NCIC missing persons file. In circumstances in which an AMBER Alert has been initiated, the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons shall also be contacted immediately for the cancellation of the AMBER Alert.

H. Follow-up Contact with Supervisor and CID Investigator

1. The initial report taker shall notify the on-duty supervisor any time a missing juvenile report is taken. The initial report taker should complete the missing child report as soon as possible and forward it to records division. The initial report taker should notify CID by contacting the Investigator on call or the CID Supervisor.
2. The initial missing juvenile report will be forwarded to the CID Supervisor where the report will be assigned to a follow-up investigator who will make contact with the complainant.
3. Reports concerning juveniles will be handled in compliance with [NCGS 7B-3001\(b\)](#).

I. Follow-up Investigation and Search

A follow-up investigation shall be initiated immediately by the officer taking the initial report and any possible location of the missing person shall be searched for the presence of that person. The follow-up investigator assigned to the case shall seek additional information in the case that was not indicated in the initial report to include the background of the individual, past habits, information of mental illness, medications, etc. and make an effort to locate the individual.

J. *Preliminary Reports*

All preliminary reports will be submitted before the end of tour of duty by the officer taking the report.

III. UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

- A. Any officer responding to an incident with an unidentified person, whether living or deceased, adult or juvenile will gather and record the following information:
1. A complete description of the person.
 2. Identifying information or documents.
 3. Emergency contact, next of kin, parent, or guardian.
 4. Information from bystanders, witnesses, or others who may have information about the unidentified person.
 5. Information and observations related to possible criminal victimization of the unidentified person.
- B. If the officer is unable to ascertain the unidentified person's identity, the officer will notify the on-duty supervisor and further investigate. The officer/supervisor may also contact the Criminal Investigative Division for assistance with the following:
1. Contact communications to inquire about missing person reports matching the unidentified person's description and follow up on any potential matches.
 2. Enter the unidentified person's description into the NCIC Unidentified Person File and manage notifications. Once cleared, the officer or investigator will clear the entry.
 3. Use all available resources to aid in the identification of the person including NCIC, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, other missing person/children clearinghouses, medical examiners, etc.
 4. If the unidentified person is a living juvenile, the officer will contact the Alamance County Department of Social Services.
- C. If the unidentified person shows signs of mental or physical impairment or injury, the officer should assess the immediate needs and address those needs with Emergency Medical Services, Mobile Crisis, or other appropriate services.

D. If the unidentified person appears to be an infant under thirty days of age and has been voluntarily delivered to an officer, the officer will follow the procedures outlined in [NCGS 7B-500](#) as a Safe Surrender. The receiving officer will contact the Alamance County Department of Social Services immediately after addressing the physical health and well-being of the infant.