



GENERAL ORDER

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office

Chapter: Operations

Section: 401.6

Subject: Operational Functions

Topic: Amber Alert Plan

Enacted: 07/30/2015

Last Review: 07/24/2015

Review: 07/30/2016

I. PURPOSE

Time is of the essence when a child is abducted. The Amber Alert Plan provides for quick notification to the public by commercial broadcast methods regarding the abduction of children. Under the Amber Alert Plan, radio and television stations may immediately interrupt regular programming to broadcast information about a child abduction by using an Internet site and the EAS (Emergency Alert System, formerly known as the Emergency Broadcast System) to report serious child abduction cases.

The purpose of this General Order is to set forth guidelines for implementing the Amber Alert Plan in order to increase the likelihood that the child will be found quickly.

II. POLICY

During reported cases of juvenile abduction, it is the policy of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office to follow the procedures outlined in the Code of Virginia when requesting the implementation of the Amber Alert Plan.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Recognizing that the Amber Alert Plan can be effective but that it can generate the need for a high level of law enforcement resources, the alert must be used only in certain cases. The alert shall be used where the disappearance of a child poses a credible threat as determined by law enforcement to the safety and health of the child and under such other circumstances as deemed appropriate by the Virginia State Police. Before a statewide Amber Alert Plan can be utilized, specific criteria must be met. The following conditions must be met in order to activate the plan:

1. There is a reported abduction and, upon preliminary investigation, the deputy assigned believes the child has in fact been abducted against their will (unwillingly taken from their environment without permission from the child's parent or legal guardian) and eliminated alternative explanations
2. The law enforcement agency believes the abducted child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death
3. The victim is a child 17 years of age or younger

4. Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the child, suspect, and/or the suspect's vehicle.
- B. If all conditions are met, the patrol deputy will advise his/her supervisor of the situation. The senior ranking Sheriff's Office incident scene supervisor or Criminal Investigations Division Commander shall confer with the Virginia State Police and provide information regarding the abducted child to the Virginia State Police.
- C. The Virginia State Police shall confirm the accuracy of the information and provide assistance in the implementation of the Amber Alert Program as the investigation dictates. The initial decision to make a statewide Amber Alert shall be at the discretion of the Virginia State Police. The Missing Children Information Clearinghouse operated by the Virginia State Police shall serve as the central repository for information related to the abduction.
- D. In those situations deemed appropriate, the Virginia State Police shall send the Amber Alert to Virginia's EAS. Participating media are encouraged to issue the alert at designated intervals as specified by the Amber Alert Program.
- E. Once the Virginia State Police has authorized the alert, the on-duty Emergency Communications Center supervisor will notify the Sheriff, Bureau Commanders, Field Operations Division Commander and the Criminal Investigations Division Commander that the alert has been made.
- F. The initial decision to make a local or regional Amber Alert shall be at the discretion of the Sheriff's Office. Should all the criteria for the Amber Alert Plan not be met but media notification could nevertheless be beneficial, the Sheriff's Office Chief Information Officer (CIO) or Public Information Officer (PIO) will be immediately notified by the assigned deputy/investigator or, in his/her absence, the on-duty patrol supervisor. The CIO/PIO will initiate contact with the electronic media outlets and network (wire) services, and request immediate broadcast of descriptive information.
- G. The statewide Amber Alert shall be cancelled under the terms of the Amber Agreement. Any local law enforcement agency that locates a child who is the subject of an alert shall notify the Virginia State Police immediately that the child has been located.