

GENERAL ORDER

G.O. 5-410

SUBJECT: MISSING PERSONS INVESTIGATIONS



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INDEX: DEFINITIONS, ACCEPTANCE OF INITIAL CALL, RESPONDING OFFICERS INITIAL CONTACT, CLOSURE OF MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATION, REPORTS AND FORMS, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

I. **PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITY:**

- A. Purpose: To set the policy and establish the procedures and requirements associated with the investigation of Missing Persons cases.
- B. Responsibility:
 - 1. It will be the responsibility of all officers, dispatchers or other designated personnel of this Police Department who take the initial report of a missing person to determine if the report is an actual missing persons report according to the definition of a missing person as defined in this policy.

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2. It will be the responsibility of this Police Department to immediately assist any person who is attempting to make a report of a missing person or runaway.

II. DISCUSSION:

- A. This general order deals with the authorized requirements and approved procedures associated with the investigation of Missing Persons cases. This General Order was developed as a result of Connecticut Public Act 11-102 being enacted by the Connecticut Senate and House of Representatives and became effective October 1, 2011. As a result of this public act the Police Officers Standards and Training Council (POSTC) developed procedures and guidelines for investigating missing persons reports and this General Order follows that criteria.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. ADULT MISSING PERSON: An individual who has attained the age of 18 years.
- B. ADULT PERSON: An individual who has attained the age of 18 years.
- C. AMBER ALERT: Defined as "America's Missing": Broadcast Emergency Response Alert is a nationally recognized program used by law enforcement to help find children under the most serious life threatening conditions. This is a rapid notification to the public which utilizes all available technology during the critical period after a child/missing person has been abducted. The system can be activated by any police unit in the state. The State Police Message Center is the clearinghouse for all AMBER Alert information and there is a set procedure for activating, broadcasting and deactivating the system.
- D. AT RISK: Regardless of age, a missing person is at risk when missing under circumstances in which the individual is in danger of serious physical injury or death. This policy presumes that every missing person or missing adult person will be considered at high risk until a reasonable and articulate basis to conclude otherwise exists.

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- E. CATASTROPHIC MISSING PERSON: Is possibly a victim of a disaster (i.e., boating accident, plane crash, earthquake, flood, fire, terrorist act, etc.).
- F. CODIS: Is the Combined DNA Index System for missing persons which generates investigative leads in cases where biological evidence is recovered from the crime scene.
- G. DEPENDENT ADULT: Is an adult who has physical or mental limitations which restrict his/her ability to carry out normal activities (e.g., Alzheimers disease, mentally handicapped).
- H. DNA: Is a material that is found in the nucleus of white blood cells and some structures outside the nucleus called mitochondria. Known as the “blueprint of life”, it acts as a genetic code that distinguishes one person from another.
- I. DNA DATA BASE: Is the Department of Justice DNA data base for all cases involving the report of an unidentified deceased person or a high-risk missing person. The DOJ data base is called CODIS, as an acronym for “Combined DNA Index System”. The system is similar in concept to that of the fingerprint index process, in attempting to identify offenders by their unique substance and link them to the crime.
- J. EAGLE EYE: Is a network that may be used whenever a child under the age of 16 is suspected or known to be abducted and cannot be located. It is initiated by contacting State Police Central Criminal Intelligence Unit (CCIU) to arrange for a missing person poster to be sent to the U.S. Postal Service for distribution. The information may also be posted on the Statewide Police Intelligence Network (SPIN) electronic bulletin board.
- K. IAFIS: Is the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System, a national fingerprint and criminal history system maintained by the FBI, Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division.
- L. LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY: Is the Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection, any municipal police department or any federal law enforcement agency.

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- M. LOST: Is a missing person who has strayed away and whose whereabouts are unknown.
- N. MISSING CHILD: Is any person who is under the age of eighteen (18) years, whose temporary or permanent residence is in Connecticut or is believed to be in Connecticut, whose location has not been determined, and who has been reported missing to a law enforcement agency (CGS 29-1e(b)(1)).
- O. MISSING CHILD REPORT: A report that is prepared on a form designated by the Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection for the use by private citizens and law enforcement agencies to report missing children information to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (CGS Sec 29-1e). Any municipal police department which receives a report of a missing child under eighteen (18) years of age shall immediately accept such a report for filing and inform all on-duty police officers of the existence of the missing child report and communicate the report to other appropriate law enforcement agencies (CGS Sec 7-282c).
- P. MISSING/NOT AT RISK ADULT: Is an adult who meets any of the following criteria:
 - 1. Absent spouse: Who has committed no crime and is legally free to come and go. Caution should be exercised both in preserving the privacy of the spouse in their wish to keep their whereabouts unknown and in making sure that the "absent spouse" is not, in fact, the victim of foul play related to domestic abuse;
 - 2. An adult who has left a note and/or told a credible person that they are intentionally absent; (An exception would be a suicide note)
 - 3. An adult who simply has not been in touch with the reporting party for an extended period of time, unless extenuating circumstances exist;
 - 4. Fugitives from justice including AWOL service personnel;
 - 5. An adult who is being sought for business or social purposes such as debt collections or social reunions.

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- Q. MISSING PERSON: Is any person who is reported missing to a law enforcement agency until the person is located or determined to be a voluntarily missing adult. It also includes any child who is missing voluntarily or involuntarily, or under circumstances not conforming to his or her ordinary habits or behavior and who may be in need of assistance per CGS Sec 46b-120.
- R. NAMUS: Is the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System and serves as a searchable on-line repository for missing and unidentified persons records that includes case data and circumstances, agency information, dental records an NCIC coding, fingerprint classifications and DNA testing status.
- S. NCIC: Is the National Crime Information Center. A nationwide, on-line computer telecommunications system that is maintained by the FBI. NCIC's Missing Person File was implemented in 1975. Records in the Missing Person File are retained indefinitely, until the individual is located or the record is canceled by the entering agency.
- T. NCIC NUMBER: Is a computerized generated number automatically assigned by NCIC to each accepted record usually noted on the reporting agency's Missing Person Report.
- U. PARENT/FAMILY ABDUCTION: Is a child who has been taken, detained, concealed, enticed away, or retained by a parent or non-parent family member.
- V. REPORTING MYTH: Is an incorrect assumption that twenty four (24) hours, or any other time frame, must pass before a law enforcement agency will accept a missing person report. There is NO waiting period for reporting a missing person.
- W. RUNAWAY: Is any child who is voluntarily missing.
- X. SILVER ALERT: Is a system that applies to any missing person age eighteen (18) years or older who has a mental impairment, a person sixty five (65) years of age or older and a person under the age of fifteen (15) years. Both Amber Alert and Silver Alert systems create an emergency notification system for law enforcement agencies to broadcast local, regional, or statewide public alerts via radio, television and electronic highway signs. The Silver Alert system mandates that law enforcement immediately begin searching for missing individuals who are ages 65

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or older, or 18 and over if mentally impaired. Once the police receive a missing person report and a description of the missing person, the information is broadcast via radio, television, and electronic highway signs through the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The plan alerts the public as quickly as possible to the disappearance so everyone may assist in the search for the safe return of the individual.

- Y. STRANGER ABDUCTION: Is a missing person taken/kidnapped by a stranger (Includes cases of a known abductor who is not a family member).
- Z. SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES: Is circumstances which give rise to the belief that "foul play" may have been involved; the disappearance is out of character for the individual and no known reason can be determined.
- AA. TRAK: Is Technology to Recover Abducted Kids and is operated by the Connecticut Missing Person Clearinghouse, which is organized to assist with missing person investigations and to do research and planning. The clearinghouse can create, retrieve, and distribute missing person color posters electronically through the TRAK system CGS 29-1e. Another major resource is the National Missing Children Hotline, accessible at 800 843-5678. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) also offers the Lost Child Alert Technology Resource (LOCATER) which is available to law enforcement at no cost.
- BB. UPS: Is the Unidentified Persons System, an automated database maintained by the Department of Justice (DOJ).
- CC. ViCAP: Is the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program. This national data center is designed to collect, collate, and analyze information on crimes of violence.
- DD. VOLUNTARY MISSING ADULT: Is a missing adult who has left on his/her own free will.
- EE. YOUTH IN CRISIS: Per CGS Sec 46b-120, means any youth who, within the last two years, (a) Has without just cause run away from the parental home or other properly authorized and lawful place of abode, (b) Is beyond the control of parents, guardian or other custodian, or (c) Has four unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten unexcused absences in any school year.

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IV. POLICY:

- A. It will be the policy of the Monroe Police Department, to immediately assist any person who is attempting to make a report of a missing person or runaway.
- B. It will be the policy of the Monroe Police Department that all officers, dispatchers, and any other designated personnel adhere to the procedures set forth in this General Order.

V. PROCEDURES:

A. ACCEPTANCE OF INITIAL CALL:

- 1. Determination of missing person: Officers, dispatchers or other designated personnel who take the initial call by telephone, in person, or by electronic media shall determine if the call is in fact a missing person case according to the definition of a missing person as described in the definitions section of this General Order.
- 2. Confirmation of responsibility for acceptance of report, priority in handling and agency notification:
 - a. It is the duty of all officers, dispatchers, or any other designated personnel to immediately assist any person who is attempting to make a report of a missing person or runaway and a report shall be accepted regardless of jurisdiction.
 - b. When a report is received of a missing child under 18 years of age, it shall be immediately accepted for filing and all on-duty officers will be notified of the existence of the missing child report and communicate the report to other appropriate law enforcement agencies (CGS Sec. 7-282c).
 - c. When an initial missing person report is accepted, it will be the responsibility of the on-duty supervisor to ensure that the law

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enforcement agency that has jurisdiction over the missing persons resident address, if other than Monroe, is promptly notified and sent copies of the report. The law enforcement agency having jurisdiction where the missing person was last seen shall also receive copies of initial reports. It may also be appropriate to notify the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction of the missing persons intended destination.

- d. When this agency receives notification of jurisdiction over any aspect of a missing person investigation, this agency will give appropriate assistance in the active investigation, follow-up as requested by the law enforcement agency making the request, and provide all reports, records and assistance appropriate to the investigation.

B. RESPONDING OFFICERS INITIAL CONTACT:

1. Responding officers shall interview, with sensitivity, the reporting party and any witnesses to determine the following:
 - a. Is this a missing person or adult missing person case;
 - b. Is the missing person at risk;
 - c. Is there any existence of any suspicious circumstances;
 - d. Is there any potential crime scene areas and/or potential witnesses.
2. Acceptance of additional documents relative to missing persons investigation: Many times, parents or guardians are anxious to assist law enforcement in the initial phase of the investigation and they will want to provide additional documents to assist in determining the location of their loved one. Besides obtaining photographs of the missing person, additional items such as fingerprint cards obtained through community fair projects, items containing DNA samples or other related documents may be offered voluntarily by the family. The responding officer shall accept these items and properly document their collection in their reports. These items shall be treated, submitted and stored as evidence. Officers shall also inform the

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follow-up investigators that these items have been collected.

3. Gathering of information: It is required of the initial responding officer to obtain the following information to aid in the search for the missing person and completion of reports:
 - a. Name, age and physical description of the missing person, and relationship of the reporting person to the missing person;
 - b. Time and place last seen and the identity of anyone accompanying the missing person;
 - c. The extent of any search already conducted for the missing person;
 - d. Whether the missing person has been reported missing before and the degree to which the absence departs from the established behavior patterns, habits or plans;
 - e. Whether the missing person has been involved recently in domestic problems; suffered emotional trauma or life crisis; demonstrated unusual , uncharacteristic or bizarre behavior; has talked about running away or committing suicide; is dependent on drugs or alcohol; or has a history of mental illness;
 - f. The physical condition of the missing person and whether the person is currently on prescription medication, and if so, did the missing person take the medication with them;
 - g. Any information about a vehicle or other form of transportation;
 - h. Whether the missing person has taken anything with them (e.g., food, clothing, money, weapons, personal items, etc.). If they have bank accounts, charge cards, check them for recent activity;
 - i. If at the missing person's home, check for notes, travel folders, newspaper articles or like items in the missing person's room. If there is a computer, try to view his/her social networking sites and consider

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appropriate safeguards for later analysis;

- j. At the earliest possible moment, notify dispatcher and all on-duty officers;
 - k. Whether the missing person has a cell telephone or pager. Determine the cell phone carrier and consider contacting their Law Enforcement assistance department for help. Record and call the number. Leave a message if voice mail picks up;
 - l. Whether the missing person has relatives, friends or neighbors whom he/she may visit or otherwise contact;
 - m. Whether the missing person has failed to perform some important task (e.g., pick up children, feed pets, etc.).
4. Further assessment: It will be the responsibility of the initial responding officer to make a further assessment to determine what reasonable steps should be taken to locate the missing person. Appropriate actions minimally include:
- a. Broadcasting a "Be On the Lookout" (BOLO) bulletin within this jurisdiction if:
 - 1. The missing person is under 18 years of age or;
 - 2. There is evidence that the missing person is at risk regardless of age.
 - b. Enter information into the Connecticut On-Line Law Enforcement Teleprocessing (COLLECT) and N.C.I.C.;
 - c. Lay groundwork for neighborhood or area canvass. Determine what personnel and resources are required for this search;
 - d. Determine if there is any area or property to be protected as a crime scene;

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- e. Determine if the missing person fits the mandatory criteria for an **AMBER ALERT** of which the criteria is:
 - 1. The missing person must be under the age of 18 or of proven mental or physical disability;
 - 2. Belief that the missing child is in imminent danger of bodily injury or death;
 - 3. Must have accurate information on at least one of the following:
 - a. Description of child;
 - b. Description of suspect; or
 - c. Description of vehicle.
- f. If the above criteria is met, and there are no extenuating investigative need that dictates otherwise, the Emergency Alert System should be activated. **When a child is reported missing, regardless of reason, the initial responding officer will immediately notify a supervisor.**
- g. Determine if the missing person fits the mandatory criteria for a **SILVER ALERT** of which the criteria is:
 - 1. Any person age 18 years of age or older who has a mental impairment;
 - 2. A person who is 65 years of age or older; or
 - 3. A person under the age of 15 years.
- h. If the above criteria is met, and there is no extenuating investigative need that dictates otherwise, the Emergency Alert System should be

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activated. Both **AMBER ALERT** and **SILVER ALERT** systems create an emergency notification procedure for law enforcement agencies to broadcast local, regional, or statewide public alerts via radio, television, electronic highway signs and the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) program. The Silver Alert system mandates that law enforcement agencies immediately begin searching for missing individuals who meet the criteria of a Silver Alert individual. Once the law enforcement agency receives a missing person report and a description of the missing person, the information is broadcast via radio, television, and electronic highway signs through the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The plan alerts the public as quickly as possible to the disappearance so everyone may assist in the search for the safe return of the individual;

- i. Determine if a supervisor and/or an investigator should be summoned to the scene or any other assistance or support is required;
- j. Thoroughly search the immediate and surrounding area in a logical and systematic manner. For children, search the house first (even if the reporting party said they have already done so);
- k. Process and preserve any potential crime scene evidence;
- l. Identify and interview any potential witnesses;
- m. Examine court orders regarding custody matters, if applicable;
- n. Determine if any other agencies should be notified for assistance;
- o. Request assistance from the family or reporting party in obtaining initial items of evidence belonging to the missing person;
- p. In high risk, at risk or high priority cases where canine assistance will be requested, officers should identify but not touch any "scent article" that would be used by the canine handler. "Scent articles" could include a hat, comb/brush, sock, razor, toothbrush, garments that were recently worn by the missing person and not handled by anyone

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else, etc.;

- q. Obtain a list of persons known by the missing person's friends, co-workers, acquaintances, associates, etc.;
- r. Obtain a list of locations frequented by the missing person, hobbies, interests and preferences;
- s. Determine if a person has been missing for 30 days or more and if so it shall be entered into NAMUS. To enter missing person data an individual must be a registered user of the service:
 - 1. To become a registered user of the NAMUS system go on-line to www.findthemissing.org and select the "Register" button on the navigation bar;
 - 2. Registration allows the law enforcement officer to have direct involvement with the case and the assigned NAMUS Regional Services Specialist (RSS) to obtain case details and biometric data;
 - 3. Once the case is entered into NAMUS, the submitting Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) should request to be included as a local contact on the case, if they are already not. The RSS will facilitate obtaining the biometric data, which includes dental records for the NAMUS Forensic Odontologist to code and upload to the NAMUS case file. Additionally, the RSS will facilitate a fingerprint classification request and a request for DNA on a Family Reference Sample (FRS);
 - 4. NAMUS offers a case matching feature that should be monitored by the LEO for potential matches. When a match of interest is discovered the LEO should bring it to the attention of the RSS for expediting the comparison.
- 5. Death scene investigation: Upon the completion of a death scene investigation of an unidentified, unknown body where homicide is suspected,

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the official with custody of the human remains shall ensure that the human remains are delivered to the office of the Chief Medical Examiner. The Chief Medical Examiner shall obtain from the human remains samples of tissue suitable for DNA typing or samples of bone or hair suitable for DNA typing. The Chief Medical Examiner shall immediately submit the samples obtained to the Division of Scientific Services within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection.

6. Interaction with Complainants and Others: It is important that officers remain in contact with the family of all missing persons or adult missing persons and with any other associated person. In missing person or adult missing person investigations, law enforcement agencies should consider appointing and assigning an officer as “family liaison” to keep families updated on the progress of the investigation, to assist with the preparation and distribution of missing person or adult missing person posters, to provide support and coordination with all missing person organizations and to focus the point of contact for communications. All officers, investigators and supervisors involved in missing person or adult missing person investigations need to be particularly sensitive to the interests, concerns and needs of the family or other reporting persons, and to the fullest extent possible, continually communicate relevant and appropriate information on the handling of the case. Medical support, including consultation with a therapist is advisable, and law enforcement should advise the reporting party of the two clearing houses, listed below, to which they may also report a missing person:
 - a. For a person 17 years of age and younger, contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children;
 - b. For a person 18 years of age or older, contact the National Center for Missing Adults.
7. Follow-up contacts: Officers or other designated personnel should re-contact the reporting party within 30 days of the initial report to determine if any additional information may have become available. When a missing person is found, the law enforcement agency must report this event through all formal channels as listed:

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- a. The officer, communications dispatcher or any other designated personnel shall prepare a formal report of the event;
 - b. The reporting party and other involved agencies shall be notified and the notification recorded on the Monroe Police Department's reporting form;
 - c. Any automated system entries shall be cancelled;
 - d. Information regarding any found, unidentified persons, alive or deceased, should be entered into the Connecticut On-Line Law Enforcement Communication Teleprocessing (COLLECT) system and NCIC;
 - e. In the event that a missing person is found before being reported to the COLLECT system, a missing person report, followed by a cancellation, must still be made into the system.
- C. **CLOSURE OF MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATION:** Careful consideration should be made concerning clearing a missing person investigation. Closure is obviously appropriate when the missing person is confirmed returned or evidence has matched an unidentified person or body. Inability to move forward in the investigation should not be a reason for closing a case. By closing a case in this manner, all evidence may be lost for the future identification of a deceased person. An unidentified body may be discovered several years later after the missing person report had been filed and prematurely closed. In such a case, there may be no relevant evidence that may assist in identifying the body, further hindering a death investigation. When the reported missing person is under the age of eighteen (18), the missing person should remain classified under their actual age when originally reported missing, regardless of their current age. A missing child report should not be cancelled and re-entered simply because the child has reached adulthood. The missing child report should not be removed or cancelled from any automated system due to emancipation or reaching adulthood.
- D. **REPORTS AND FORMS:** All investigating officers are required to prepare complete and detailed written incident reports on all cases involving reports received of missing person or missing adult persons. Additionally, any appropriate forms related

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to missing person or missing adult person investigations will also be completed. All reports will be reviewed contemporaneously by the officer's immediate supervisor.

- E. **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** In addition to local and state resources, there are several national agencies and organizations that are available for additional assistance in missing person investigations. These agencies and organizations should be prevailed upon for any assistance:

1. **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)**
699 Prince St.
Alexandria, Va. 22314
800 843-5678
www.missingkids.com
2. **Alzheimer's Association "Safe Return" Program**
800 272-3900
www.alz.org
3. **US Department of State, Child Custody Division**
Bureau of Consular Affairs
202 736-7000
4. **US Department of State, Office of Passport Services**
202 955-0307
5. **US Postal Service**
202 268-4267
6. **US Department of Defense**
800 336-4592
7. **US Office of Personnel Management**
8. **Fisher Scientific Catalog**
800 766-7000
www.fishersci.com

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9. MedTech Forensics Catalog
 800 596-6420
 www.medtechforensics.com
10. National Center for Missing Adults (NAMA)
 4641 North 12th Street, Suite 100
 Phoenix,AZ 85014
 800 690-FIND
 www.theyaremissd.org
11. National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NAMUS)
 US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs
 810 7th Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20531
 www.questions@findthemissing.org