

Policy 334 Public Alerts

334.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for alerting the public to important information and soliciting public aid when appropriate.

334.2 POLICY

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.

334.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

334.3.1 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the Mountlake Terrace Police Department should notify their supervisors, Shift Sergeant or Investigations Division 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.

334.3.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

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 the Chief of Police, the appropriate Division Commander and the Commander Services Commander when any public alert is generated.

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

- a. Updating alerts
- b. Canceling alerts
- c. Ensuring all appropriate reports are completed
- d. Preparing an after-action evaluation of the investigation to be forwarded to the Division Commander

334.3.3 PUBLIC ALERT REPORTING OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief of Police should designate a public alert reporting officer, who is responsible for:

- a. Remaining familiar with the protocols for activating, maintaining and cancelling all applicable public alerts.
- b. Being the point of contact with the Washington AMBER Alert Advisory Committee.
- c. Ensuring the Department has members who have completed the appropriate training.

334.4 WASHINGTON STATEWIDE AMBER ALERT™ PLAN

The AMBER Alert™ Plan is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement, state government agencies, broadcasters and other participants to rapidly disseminate information to enhance the public's ability to assist in recovering abducted children (RCW 13.60.010).

The Mountlake Terrace Police Department participates in this partnership and may initiate an AMBER Alert to disseminate information to the public when the criteria for an AMBER Alert are met.

334.4.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria must exist prior to requesting an AMBER Alert:

- a. The child is under 18 years of age and is known to have been abducted. The child is not a runaway or an abandoned child.
- b. The abducted child is believed to be in danger of death or serious bodily injury.
- c. The AMBER Alert activation should occur within four hours of the qualifying event unless circumstances or the timeliness of the information warrant otherwise.
- d. There must be enough descriptive information to believe that an AMBER Alert activation will assist in the recovery of the child, including:
 1. Where the abduction took place.
 2. A physical description of the child: height, weight, age, hair color and length, eye color, clothing worn when the child was last seen, and any distinguishing physical characteristics.
 3. A physical description of the abductor: height, weight, age, hair color and length, eye color, clothing worn when the suspect last seen, and any distinguishing physical characteristics.
 4. Place last seen.
 5. Description of the vehicle: color, make, model, license number, approximate year.
- e. The incident must be reported to and investigated by a law enforcement agency.

334.4.2 PROCEDURE

Should the Shift Sergeant or supervisor determine that the incident meets the criteria of the Washington Statewide AMBER Alert Plan, the Shift Sergeant or supervisor should:

- a. Ensure that department protocol is followed regarding approval of the alert.
- b. Ensure all appropriate documentation is completed.
- c. Contact the Washington State Patrol (WSP) Communication Center for entry into the Law Enforcement Alerting Portal (LEAP).
- d. Ensure prompt entry of information into the Washington Crime Information Center (WACIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) databases.
- e. Promptly notify the Chief of Police and the appropriate Division Commander of any AMBER Alert activation.
- f. Ensure the preparation of an initial press release that includes all the information required by the Washington Statewide AMBER Alert Plan, and any other available information that might aid in locating the child, such as:
 1. A photograph.
 2. Detail regarding location of incident, direction of travel, and potential destinations, if known.
 3. Name and telephone number of the Commander Services Commander (PIO) or other authorized point of contact to handle media and law enforcement liaison.
 4. A telephone number and point of contact for the public to call with leads or information.

334.5 ENDANGERED MISSING PERSON ADVISORY

The Endangered Missing Person Advisory is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement, other government agencies, and local broadcasters to rapidly disseminate information to law enforcement agencies, the media, and the public about a missing and endangered person in circumstances that do not qualify for an AMBER Alert (RCW 13.60.050).

The Mountlake Terrace Police Department participates in this partnership and may initiate the required notifications whenever a person is reported missing from this jurisdiction and meets the criteria of an Endangered Missing Person.

An endangered missing person advisory may be termed a (RCW 13.60.010):

- a. "Silver alert" when initiated to assist in the recovery of a missing endangered person age 60 or older.
- b. "Missing Indigenous person alert" to assist in the recovery of a missing Indigenous person.

334.5.1 CRITERIA

All of the following criteria must exist prior to initiating an Endangered Missing Person Advisory:

- a. The person is missing under unexplained, involuntary, or suspicious circumstances.
- b. The person has a developmental disability, is a vulnerable adult, or is believed to be in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, in combination with environmental or weather conditions, or is believed to be unable to return to safety without assistance. This also includes a person diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease or other age-related dementia (RCW 13.60.010).
- c. There is enough information that could assist the public in the safe recovery of the missing person (e.g., photo or description, clothing worn when last seen, vehicle, location last seen).
- d. The incident has been reported to and investigated by a law enforcement agency.

334.5.2 PROCEDURE

Should the Shift Sergeant or supervisor determine that the incident meets the criteria of an Endangered Missing Person Advisory, the Shift Sergeant or supervisor should:

- a. Ensure that department protocol is followed regarding approval of the alert.
- b. Ensure all appropriate documentation is completed.
- c. Contact the WSP Communication Center for entry into LEAP.
- d. Direct Records Unit personnel to enter the information into the WACIC and NCIC databases using the proper message key: Missing (MNP), Endangered (EME), or Involuntary (EMI).
- e. Notify Snohomish County 911 of the advisory and ensure that it is prepared to handle a high volume of telephone calls.
- f. Ensure that the handling officer attempts to obtain a photograph of the missing person and/or suspect as soon as possible.
- g. Direct the Records Unit to enter the photograph into WACIC and NCIC, then send an email to the WSP Missing Persons Unit (MPU).
- h. Appoint a PIO to handle the media.
 1. The PIO should notify the media through appropriate channels regarding the Endangered Person Advisory. Upon request, the WSP MPU can provide electronic posters with details of the missing person.
 2. If the Endangered Missing Person is 21 years of age or younger, NCMEC should be notified as soon as practicable.
- i. The Records Unit personnel should promptly cancel the advisory after an Endangered Missing Person is located by sending an administrative message through A Central Computerized Enforcement Service System (ACCESS), noting that the person has been found.

334.6 BLUE ALERTS

The Blue Alert system is a voluntary cooperation between law enforcement, state government agencies and local broadcasters to enhance the public's ability to assist in locating and apprehending persons suspected of killing or seriously injuring a law enforcement officer (RCW 10.108.030).

The Mountlake Terrace Police Department participates in this partnership and may initiate a Blue Alert to disseminate information to the public when the criteria for a Blue Alert are met.

334.6.1 CRITERIA

All of the following criteria are required to exist prior to initiating a Blue Alert (RCW 10.108.030):

- a. The suspect has not been apprehended.
- b. The suspect poses a serious threat to the public.
- c. Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public to assist in locating and apprehending the suspect.
- d. The release of the information will not compromise the investigation.
- e. The release of the information will not improperly notify an officer's next of kin.

334.6.2 PROCEDURE

Should the Shift Sergeant or supervisor determine that the incident meets the criteria of a Blue Alert, the Shift Sergeant or supervisor should:

- a. Direct Records Unit personnel to prepare a Blue Alert administrative message through ACCESS. The words, "Blue Alert Advisory" should be included in the title of the message.
- b. Contact WSP Communications to verify that the advisory was received and, if available, provide the suspect's vehicle information and request the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to activate variable message signs.
- c. Ensure that descriptive information about the suspect, the suspect's whereabouts, and the suspect's method of escape is disseminated.
- d. Appoint a PIO to issue press releases and handle media inquiries.
 1. The PIO should be updated continually and be in constant contact with all media outlets to obtain maximum media exposure, provide updates, and cancel the Blue Alert when appropriate.
- e. Notify Snohomish County 911 of the Blue Alert and ensure that it is prepared to handle a high volume of telephone calls.
- f. Ensure that a press release is issued cancelling the Blue Alert.

334.7 SNOHOMISH COUNTY GUIDE TO COMMUNITY NOTIFICATIONS

Refer to Appendix

334.8 COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION DURING EMERGENCIES - MYSTATEUSA

334.8.1 PHILOSOPHY

During local emergencies, it is critical that accurate and timely information be disseminated to the affected public. It is likewise critical that unity of command and organizational structure be maintained in order to efficiently and effectively respond to emergencies with the appropriate resources. MyStateUSA, a community notification system (reverse 911), is a highly effective mechanism for disseminating information and instructions to the public during emergencies.

334.8.2 PROCEDURE

Through a cooperative agreement between SNOCOM user agencies, Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and the Emergency Services Coordinating Agency (ESCA), the City of Mountlake Terrace has access to MyStateUSA. This regional notification program allows for the dissemination of information and instructions to the affected community using various media; cellular or landline phones, pagers and email.

MyStateUSA is designed to function as a common avenue for community notification during local emergencies. The system has the ability to efficiently and effectively notify the population within both local and regional areas, disseminating critical information and instructions. There is a charge for each individual call made during an event. The charges are billed through SNOCOM to the user agency that requested the notification. For multi-jurisdiction, county-wide or regional emergencies, notifications will be made by DEM and ESCA.

In the event of an incident affecting the City of Mountlake Terrace, the City Manager or his/her designee is authorized to initiate community notifications via the MyStateUSA system. All requests for use of this system shall be forwarded through the proper chain of command.

If a potential qualifying event occurs after normal business hours, the Command Duty Officer shall be notified of the request.

334.9 HIT-AND-RUN ALERTS

The Hit-and-Run Alert system is a program of cooperation among state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies and WSDOT to enhance the ability to identify and recover a fleeing vehicle involved in a serious injury or fatality hit-and-run collision.

334.9.1 CRITERIA

All of the following criteria must exist prior to initiating a Hit-and-Run Alert:

- a. A hit-and-run collision resulting in serious injury or death occurred (RCW 46.52.020).
- b. Enough descriptive information is available to assist in locating the suspect vehicle, such as a full or partial license plate, a description of the vehicle and any possible damage to it, location, or direction of travel when last seen.
- c. The incident has been reported and is being investigated by a law enforcement agency.

334.9.2 PROCEDURE

Should the Shift Sergeant or supervisor determine that the incident meets the criteria of a Hit-and-Run Alert, the Shift Sergeant or supervisor should:

- a. Ensure that department protocol is followed regarding approval of the alert.
- b. Ensure the appropriate form is completed.
- c. Email the form to the WSP Hit-and-Run Alert Activation Team and immediately call the Team to discuss the activation.
- d. Notify Snohomish County 911 of the advisory and ensure that it is prepared to handle a high volume of telephone calls.
- e. Appoint a PIO to handle media inquiries.

The Records Unit personnel should promptly cancel the alert when no longer needed by sending an email to the WSP Hit-and-Run Alert Activation Team.