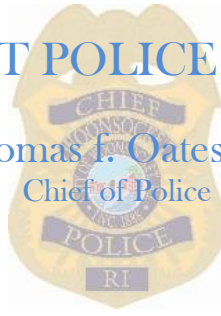


# WOONSOCKET POLICE DEPARTMENT

Thomas J. Oates, III  
Chief of Police



TYPE OF ORDER	NUMBER/SERIES	ISSUE DATE	EFFECTIVE DATE
General Order	320.09	11/19/2020	11/22/2020
SUBJECT		PREVIOUSLY ISSUED DATES	
Missing Persons		5/14/2002, 3/30/2015	
ACCREDITATION		RE-EVALUATION DATE	
CALEA Standards: 41.2.5, 41.2.6, 46.2.5 RIPAC Standards: 7.6, 7.7		11/3/2020	
INDEX		DISTRIBUTION	
Patrol Functions		Sworn Personnel Communications Personnel	

## MISSING PERSONS

### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the investigation of missing persons to include juveniles and elderly persons

### II. POLICY

Many missing person reports involve individuals who have voluntarily left home for personal reasons, while other reports are often unfounded or quickly resolved. However, there are many instances in which persons disappear for unexplained reasons and under circumstances where they may be considered at risk. The roles of the complaint taker and initial responding officer are critical in identifying the circumstances surrounding missing persons and in identifying those persons at risk. Therefore, the policy of the Woonsocket Police Department is that all reports of missing persons are given full consideration and attention by department personnel, including careful recording and investigation of factual circumstances surrounding the disappearance under this policy. Department personnel shall exercise particular care in instances involving missing children and those who may be unable to take care of themselves. Upon receiving a report of a missing person, there will be no waiting period before an investigation is initiated. Department personnel shall make a concerted effort to locate the missing person.

### III. DEFINITIONS

**Disaster Victim:** A person who is missing as the apparent result of a natural, man-made, or sporting disaster.

**Endangered:** 1) Any person who does not possess the physical or mental ability to care for themselves outside of the home environment (i.e. children, Alzheimer's victims, and mentally or physically challenged persons). 2) When the missing person is in the company of another person(s) indicating his/her physical safety is in danger. This includes a person who is possibly suicidal.

**Kidnap/Abduction:** When circumstances indicate that the disappearance was not voluntary and the person was taken against his/her will.

**Missing:** When a person's whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a time that is regarded by knowledgeable persons as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject's behavior patterns, plans, or routines.

**Runaway:** An unemancipated juvenile who has left under his/her volition.

**Involuntary:** A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety may be in danger.

**Juvenile:** A person who is missing and is under the age of 18 and does not meet any of the other criteria set forth.

**Child Abduction:** Endangered or Voluntary.

### IV. PROCEDURE

#### A. REPORTING AND CLASSIFICATION OF MISSING PERSONS

1. There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. Missing person reports shall be taken in-person by a police officer in conformance with the criteria of this policy and the criticality of the incident.
2. A person may be considered "**missing critical**" who meets the foregoing criteria and who, among other possible circumstances:
  - a. Might be the subject of foul play;
  - b. Because of age (young or old), may be unable to properly safeguard or care for him/herself;
  - c. Suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life-threatening if left untreated/unattended;

RI 7.6.e

- d. Is a patient of a mental institution and is considered potentially dangerous to him/her or others;
  - e. Has demonstrated the potential for suicide; or
  - f. May have been involved in a boating, swimming, or other sporting accident or natural disaster.
- 3. Reports of juveniles who have voluntarily left home (i.e., runaways) should be classified as such only after a thorough investigation.
  - 4. Based on the outcome of initial inquiries, a decision may be made concerning the potential danger posed to the missing person, the urgency of police response, and the potential need for further resource allocation.

RI 7.7.e

## **B. TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1. Upon receiving a report of a missing person, the telecommunications worker shall obtain the following information:
  - a. The address, names, and telephone number of the caller;
  - b. The missing person's name, age, sex, and a complete physical description, including clothing;
  - c. The location and time at which the victim was last seen; and
  - d. Any other information that may be pertinent to investigating officers including associates, possible suspects, vehicles used, and usual destinations or destinations the person frequents.
- 2. A police officer shall be immediately dispatched to the location of the call for service. After the officer has been dispatched, the dispatcher shall relay a missing person radio broadcast to all police units with a complete description of the missing person.
- 3. If it is known or suspected that the person is "missing critical," the telecommunications worker shall also send a supervisor to the location of the call for service. The shift Officer-in-Charge (OIC) will also notify the Chief of Police, via the chain of command.
- 4. Upon receiving a written missing person report, the telecommunications worker shall immediately enter the missing person's data into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) databases.

RI 7.6.c

RI 7.6.a

RI 7.7.e

## **C. INVESTIGATING OFFICER/SUPERVISORY OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

RI 7.6.a

The investigating officer shall obtain as much pertinent information as possible to properly classify the missing person. This information includes:

- a. The name, age, and physical description of the missing person and relationship of the reporting party to the missing person;
- b. The time and last known location of the missing person and the identity of anyone accompanying the subject;
- c. The extent of any search for the subject;
- d. Whether the subject has been missing on prior occasions and the degree to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits, or plans.
- e. Whether the individual has been involved recently in domestic incidents; suffered emotional trauma or life crises; demonstrated unusual, uncharacteristic, or bizarre behavior; is dependent on drugs or alcohol, or has a history of mental illness; and
- f. The current physical condition of the subject and whether the person is currently on prescription medication.

#### **RI 7.7.a**

### **D. MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN PROTOCOL**

#### **a. INITIAL RESPONSE GUIDELINES**

- a. If the missing person is a child, the officer's inquiry should also determine if the child:
  - 1) Is the child or could the child be with any adult who could cause him/her any harm?;
  - 2) May have been the target of a parental or stranger abduction; or
  - 3) Has previously run away from home, has threatened to do so, or has a history of explainable or unexplainable absences for extended periods.

#### **RI 7.7.b**

- b. If the officer determines that the person is "missing critical", he/she shall request a supervisor to respond to the location. The officer or supervisor may request additional units to respond.
  - 1) The supervisor shall assume the role of Incident Commander and shall establish a command post;
  - 2) The supervisor shall organize police units into a search party at the command post. Vital data, including a recent photo (if possible), shall be disseminated to the search party;
  - 3) The supervisor shall establish a coordinated search effort by assigning zones or areas for each officer to search. The search should start at the original location and extend outward from that point;
  - 4) The supervisor shall ensure that outside police agencies, as necessary, are notified of the missing person;

**RI 7.7.c**

- 5) The supervisor may request, through the OIC, the mobilization of additional resources (including outside agencies) necessary for an area search; and
- 6) If the search has continued for a reasonable amount of time without locating the subject, the OIC shall determine what additional efforts shall be made to locate the missing person.

c. While searching the original location, officers shall also determine if any physical evidence is present which would provide leads in the investigation. Officers shall take every precaution to preserve articles of evidence as they are discovered.

**RI 7.7.c**

d. Upon verification of a missing person, the officer shall complete a missing person report as soon as possible. The officer shall submit the report immediately, upon completion. In addition to the required data for the descriptor boxes, the officer shall include the following information in the narrative:

- 1) The location and time at which the victim was last seen;
- 2) The identity of people last seen with the victim;
- 3) The identity of any acquaintances of the victim;
- 4) Has the victim been missing on prior occasions?;
- 5) Plans, habits, routines, and personal interests of the subject and places frequented;
- 6) The nature of any problems that may have affected the victim emotionally;
- 7) Any motivation for the person to leave on his/her own volition?;
- 8) Any indications of missing personal belongings;
- 9) Evidence of foul play or accident;
- 10) The extent of any search before police response; and
- 11) If the victim is a child, the location of the school and the names of any persons who may be responsible for transportation to and from school.

e. Upon receiving a written missing person report, the OIC shall ensure that Communications personnel enter the missing person's information into NCIC and CJIS databases immediately. The OIC shall distribute a copy of the missing person report (or an informational bulletin) to the department intranet portal and roll call for dissemination by subsequent supervisors.

f. If the missing person is classified as kidnapped/abducted (or kidnap/abduction is considered a possibility), the Chief of Police will be notified via the chain of command, and callback procedures shall be instituted immediately. Officers shall preserve the location of the abduction as a crime scene and shall not allow access except to necessary investigators.

**b. MISSING JUVENILES INVESTIGATIONAL STEPS**

- a. Once an OIC has determined the veracity of the missing person case information, he/she will be required to contact the “A Child is Missing” network. This program is a rapid response communication network that provides law enforcement agencies with a uniquely effective neighborhood calling system using the latest technology to aid in the recovery of missing children or the elderly.
  - 1) Steps to be taken
    - a) Police initiate the call to the “A Child is Missing” network operating center, at 1-888-875-2246. A complete checklist of the required information is attached (See Appendix).
    - b) “A Child is Missing” programs a database and records a message to be sent out to 1,000 or more residences surrounding the location of loss where the child was last seen and a call database is selected from the databank of home numbers.
    - c) “A Child is Missing” produces a recorded message, which gives a telephone number for neighbors to call the police directly with the information. “A Child is Missing” network can rapidly cross lines of jurisdiction and can go statewide if necessary.
    - d) Contact is maintained with the network to broaden the search parameters, update information, or cancel upon a location.

#### RI 7.7.d

#### b. Amber Alert

The Rhode Island Amber Alert is a voluntary, cooperative program between law enforcement agencies and local broadcasters to send an emergency alert to the public when a child has been abducted and it is believed that the child’s life is in danger. Area radio and television stations have agreed to interrupt regular programming to broadcast information about the missing child. The Amber Alert provides law enforcement agencies with another tool to help recover abducted children and quickly apprehend the suspect. Implementation of Amber Alert shall be consistent with [General Order 320.10 Amber Alert](#).

#### RI 7.6.f

### E. MISSING SENIOR CITIZENS ALERT PROTOCOL

- a. The Rhode Island Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program is a voluntary partnership with law enforcement agencies and local broadcasters to send an emergency alert to the public when a senior citizen who has an impaired mental condition has been reported missing and whose disappearance poses a threat to their safety and health. According to RI General Law 42-28-3.3 and 42-28-3.4, the following protocol is in place for this program.

a. A missing Senior Citizen alert is initiated when:

- 1) Law Enforcement has confirmed a senior citizen with an impaired mental condition is missing. A “senior citizen” is a person 60 years of age or older;
- 2) Law Enforcement believes that the missing senior citizen poses a threat to his/her safety and health;
- 3) That the impaired mental conditions can be demonstrated by the appropriate documentation provided by the missing senior citizen’s family, legal guardian, long-term ombudsman, or long-term care facility where such a person resides. Verbal documentation can be allowed initially, though it will have to be supported with written documentation; and
- 4) That the senior citizen’s domicile is in the state of Rhode Island at the time he/she was reported missing or the senior citizen was visiting or traveling in the state at the time of being reported missing.

RI 7.6.d  
RI 7.7.f

#### F. FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATIONS

All missing person incidents requiring follow-up investigation shall be assigned to the Juvenile Unit.

A detective shall be assigned as the primary investigator in the case. The detective shall be responsible for the following investigative tasks, which includes, but are not limited to:

1. Requesting release of dental, medical, and fingerprint records, as necessary;
2. Contacting hospitals or the RI State Medical Examiner's Office, as necessary, to possibly locate the victim;
3. Conduct a subsequent search of the location of the victim's disappearance and conduct interviews as appropriate with the reporting person and persons who were with the victim or who may have frequented the area of disappearance;
4. Conduct interviews with any additional family, friends, work associates, schoolmates, and teachers as well as school counselors and social workers, as appropriate, to explore the potential for foul play, voluntary flight, or, in the case of juveniles, parental kidnapping or running away; and
5. Provide identification and related information to all divisions of the department, neighboring police agencies, and if parental or stranger abduction is suspected, the FBI.
6. Detectives may consider contacting the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)/Project Alert (1-800-843-5678)** should the matter involve a child who is endangered/missing or the child has been abducted. Authorization from the Chief of Police is required before contacting NCMEC/Project Alert.
7. Detectives may consider the use of local or national media to help locate missing persons. This decision shall be made with the approval of the Chief of Police and the victim's family members.

8. The primary detective shall maintain periodic contact with the missing person's family to keep them informed of progress in the investigation. The detective shall also advise the family (or other relevant individuals) to notify the department if contact is made with the missing person or if additional information is developed.
9. The primary detective shall complete a supplemental report every week (five) days until the subject is located. The report shall document any efforts made and results obtained in the investigation.

#### **G. MISSING PERSON RECOVERY AND CASE CLOSURE**

1. Competent adults, having left home for personal reasons, cannot be forced to return home. Officers locating such individuals shall:
    - a. Advise the person that he/she is the subject of a missing person investigation; and
    - b. Ask the person if he/she desires the reporting person or family members to be notified of his/her whereabouts and relay this information if permitted by the missing person.
  2. In all cases, reporting persons, family members, or other relevant persons shall be informed of the well being of recovered missing persons. Unless criminal matters necessitate other actions, or if the subject is a juvenile or incompetent adult, the desires of missing persons not to reveal their whereabouts shall be honored.
  3. Missing persons shall be questioned to establish the circumstances surrounding their disappearance and whether criminal activity was involved.
  4. In cases involving juveniles, officers shall ensure that:
    - a) If necessary, the juvenile receives medical attention without delay;
    - b) Initial questioning identifies the circumstances surrounding the child's disappearance, any individuals who may be criminally responsible, and/or whether an abusive or negligent home environment was a contributory factor;
    - c) Parents, guardians, and/or the reporting person are notified as soon as possible; and
    - d) Under no circumstances will a juvenile be held in the cellblock pending notification and response of the proper guardian.
- RI 7.6.b**
5. Upon recovery of a missing person, officers or detectives shall ensure that all agencies previously contacted for assistance will be notified or updated and that NCIC and RILETS databases are updated.
  6. If necessary, follow-up action (by officers or detectives) shall include filing of an abuse and neglect complaint with the State of Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & their Families. The primary investigator shall notify department personnel of the recovered missing person via roll call briefings.



7. Officers or detectives shall complete a supplemental report indicating where the missing person was located, where he/she was residing, and the names of persons who had involvement with the subject while missing.
8. If necessary, criminal charges will be investigated and charges filed where appropriate.

Per order,

***Thomas F. Oates, III***

Chief of Police

***Written directives published within PowerDMS are in full force and effect on the referenced dates and have been approved by the Chief of Police***

## **MISSING SENIOR CITIZEN ALERT PROGRAM**

### **IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

1. The initiating law enforcement agency confirms that a senior citizen with an impaired mental condition is missing and the disappearance poses a realistic threat to their safety and health. The senior citizen's mental condition can be confirmed with documentation.
2. The initiating law enforcement agency obtains adequate descriptive information for the Missing Senior Citizen Alert to complete the Missing Senior Citizen Alert Information Worksheet.
3. The initiating law enforcement agency determines that a Missing Senior Citizen Alert is warranted and subsequently contacts the Rhode Island State Police for review and assistance.
4. The initiating law enforcement agency forwards the Missing Senior Citizen Alert Information Worksheet to Rhode Island State Police Headquarters, via fax at (401) 444-1149, and confirms receipt of the fax with the Rhode Island State Police at (401) 444-1000.
5. The Rhode Island State Police confirms with the requesting law enforcement agency that a Missing Senior Citizen Alert is warranted. If warranted, the Rhode Island State Police will activate the Missing Senior Citizen Alert via the web-based Rhode Island Broadcasters Association alert system.
6. The Rhode Island State Police notifies E-911 of the activation and requests that all incoming calls are forwarded to the initiating law enforcement agency. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation Traffic Management Center is also advised of the notification for the potential use of their highway variable message boards.
7. Information from the general public is received and forwarded as appropriate to the initiating law enforcement agency.
8. The initiating law enforcement agency shall ensure that it has broadcast the pertinent information over the Intercity and/or RISPERN police radio systems, as well as broadcast the information over the RILETS telecommunications network.