

CHAPTER 110
MISSING PERSONS

DISCUSSION: Demands on police time to search and locate missing persons will vary, usually in relation to the size of the municipality. It is not the volume of demand, however, which determines the importance of this subject. The fears and concerns of those in the community reporting missing persons deserve attention. This is particularly true in the case of small children or any report where the possibility of foul play is a strong likelihood. Despite their limited resources, the police must be prepared to the best of their ability to respond to missing person reports whether such reports are isolated or common occurrences. Unfortunately, some of these reports may be unfounded or unnecessary. Some people may tend to over react to a tardy arrival or an unexplained absence. Since the police cannot ignore such reports, however, it is necessary that police activities be conducted officially, so that emphasis can be placed on those cases which truly require in depth attention.

It should be remembered that missing person are not fugitives and often have voluntarily left home for personal reasons. The person making a report of a missing person may be reluctant to inform the police of any marital, parental, or mental problems. Elderly persons often wander away from home or cannot find their way back because of mental confusion.

Reports of lost children are particularly difficult police problems as there is always the danger that they have been injured, molested or abducted. Despite the fact that most lost children turn up safely, any hesitancy on the part of the police to initiate an immediate search can bring severe criticism if the child is injured in some out of the way place or has been the victim of a crime.

110.1.1 Procedures

- A. Reports of a missing person or a lost child are most commonly received over the telephone.
- B. Upon receipt of the missing or lost child report received via telephone, the telecommunicator shall dispatch a uniformed officer to the complainant as soon as possible.
- C. The officer shall initiate an incident report in accordance with Hattiesburg Police Department's reporting policy guided by the following:
 - 1. The last, first and middle name of the missing person or lost child.
 - 2. The date of birth.
 - 3. The age.
 - 4. The present address.
 - 5. Social Security Number.
 - 6. Race and Sex.

7. Present weight.
8. Height.
9. Color of hair.
10. Color of eyes.
11. Physical build.
12. Skin complexion.
13. Mustache, beard, or hair length.
14. Whether or not the missing person or lost child was wearing glasses.
15. Description and color of clothing.
16. Any handicap or disabilities (physical or mental).
17. Scars, marks or tattoos.
18. Date of call.
19. Time of call.
20. Location from which the missing person or lost child was reported missing or lost.
21. The reporting person's name
22. The weather at the time of the call.
23. The incident control number assigned to the call.
24. The name of the telecommunicator.
25. The extent of any search already performed by the caller or other parties.
26. Whether the person has been reported missing on previous occasions.
27. Time and place at which the missing person was last seen.
29. Other information that may be useful in locating the person (for example, particular habits or personal interests, places frequented, location of out of town relatives or friends, etc.)

30. Relationship of the caller and the person reported missing.

- D. If the missing person is determined to be a juvenile runaway, a parent or responsible agency must guarantee that they will go and pick up the juvenile or make suitable arrangements for the return of the juvenile before an out of town or out of state search can be authorized. The telecommunicator shall then initiate a radio broadcast to patrol units and send the necessary teletype to the appropriate agencies.
- E. A photograph of the missing person should also be obtained, if available. Such photograph should be posted for review at each shift roll call, along with a complete description of the missing person.
- F. The officers assigned should conduct a primary investigation in an attempt to locate the individual. In the event that it becomes apparent that the person cannot be located immediately, a more detailed investigation and search will be required.
- G. Notification of the General Public through any of the news media can be valuable in locating a missing person. A decision to use such facilities shall be made by the Chief of Police or a Bureau/Division Commander after consultation with the family of missing person.
- H. Officers assigned to a missing person case SHALL FREQUENTLY report the status of the case to the person who initiated the report.
- I. When officers locate an adult missing person, the patrol supervisor shall be notified and shall notify the party who originally reported the missing person.
- J. When a juvenile missing person is found, the patrol supervisor shall be notified and shall arrange for the child to be taken home or for the parents to pick up the child. If the parents reside out of the area or in Hattiesburg and the child is located out of the area and the parents state they cannot provide transportation for the child to return home, under the provisions of its "Free Home Program", transportation will be provided by the Trailways Bus Corp. at no charge. This is dependent on the child's willingness to return home unescorted and the following criteria is met:
 - 1. Notification to Department of destination.
 - a. The officer shall contact the local law enforcement agency of the jurisdiction where the juvenile's parents/guardian reside.
 - b. The officer will request that the Department of destination:
 - (1) Verify the exact location of the parents/guardian.
 - (2) Make a reasonable determination that the alleged parents/guardian are in fact the parents/guardian of the juvenile in custody.

- (3) Make a reasonable determination as to the financial capability of the parents/guardian to provide transportation for the juvenile.
 - (4) Make a reasonable determination as to the relative stability of the parents/guardian juvenile relationship.
 - (5) Make certain that a missing person report is on file and that a copy is forwarded to the Department of origin.
 - (6) Cancel any N.C.I.C. or local missing person report.
 - (7) Accompany the parents/guardian to meet the juvenile/runaway at the bus station or other agreed upon pick up point.
- c. Have the parents/guardian sign a parental release form and forward the original to the agency holding the juvenile.

2. Obtaining bus tickets:

- a. The officer shall obtain supervisory approval with bus transportation for the juvenile runaway.
- b. The officer shall complete the ticket purchase form at the Trailways Bus Station. One copy of the form shall be retained by the officer and submitted to the Watch Commander.
- c. The officer shall complete the driver/agent receipt of juvenile passenger. The bus driver/agent shall sign the form and the officer/custodian shall retain the original of such form and give two (2) copies to the driver/agent.

3. Notification from Department of destination:

Upon arrival of the juvenile/runaway at the final destination, the Department of destination should notify the Department of origin of the time of arrival and condition of the juvenile.

- K. Whenever a missing person is located, officers shall insure that medical attention is provided, if needed.
- L. In the case of juveniles who are persistent runaways, the patrol supervisor shall notify Forrest/Lamar County Youth Court along with their parents or guardians. Youth Court personnel will determine if the juveniles shall be released or held in custody.
- M. Officers locating a missing person shall interview that person and ascertain where that person has been, missing person's traveling companions, the circumstances involved surrounding absence, means of transportation, along with any other pertinent information. It shall be the responsibility

of the patrol supervisor to insure that the officer locating the missing person files a report detailing the information along with the circumstances surrounding the finding of that person. Particular difficulties encountered, for example, reluctance or refusal to return home, should be noted.

N. In the event that foul play is suspected or the person is considered at risk the following options are available in any combination deemed necessary given the circumstances.

1. Activate the Amber Plan
2. K-9 Deployment
3. Notification of the Victim Advocate
4. Request Rescue 7 Helicopter
5. Request search and rescue activation from EOC
6. Detective/Crime Scene
7. Request assistance from Fire Department
8. Reverse 911

110.2.1 Incident Management

A. Call takers:

1. Follow protocols outlined in call guides for missing persons.
2. Collect initial call information; reporting person, location of RP and incident, incident type, call back information, descriptors of victims, suspects, vehicles and ect.
3. If abduction; immediate broadcast of victim, suspect, vehicle, and other key information to all field units.
4. Dispatch appropriate unit(s)
5. Ensure notification of surrounding agencies
6. Ensure supervisory and administrative notification
7. Ensure that missing person information is entered into NCIC per NCIC protocols and time frames.

8. Broadcast of updates as available.
9. Prepare to launch amber alert and or R-911 messaging systems.

B. First responders:

1. Conduct initial interview with reporting party
2. Identify additional witnesses
3. Confirm the person is missing. Based on the available information, make an initial determination of the type of incident: nonfamily abduction, family abduction, endangered runaway, lost or otherwise missing.
4. Secure the area
5. Continuous relay of information to communications center
6. Obtain detailed description of missing person, suspects, vehicles and ect. Collect photo of missing person. Determine if missing person has a cellular or other electronic device.
7. Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes.
8. Initial survey of area for any surveillance equipment that may have captured the incident.
9. Notify on duty supervisor
10. Prepare initial incident reports
11. Brief supervisor, investigators or other responders.

C. Supervisors:

1. Respond to scene of missing person
2. Obtain briefing form responding officer and other on-scene personnel
3. Decide if circumstances meet protocol in place for activation of an AMBER Alert and/or other immediate notifications.
4. Determine if additional personnel or outside resources are needed.
5. Establish a command post, if necessary

6. Ensure that all required notifications are made.
7. Review and approve initial incident report.
8. Coordinate with all responders to ensure that on scene activities such as interviews with key persons, area canvass, search, and evidence collection are accomplished.

D. Investigators:

1. Obtain briefing from first responders and other on-scene personnel.
2. Verify descriptive information and other details developed during preliminary investigation.
3. Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected.
4. Develop and execute an investigative plan.
5. Conduct area canvas and interviews with developed persons such as; other family members, friends, co workers and ect.
6. Follow-up in the area for security systems that may have captured or recorded the incident.
7. Consider establishing a telephone hot line.
8. Establish a leads management system to insure that leads are prioritized and followed up on.
9. Provide for case status updates.