

CHAPTER 125
THE AMBER PLAN

Discussion: In 1996, nine-year-old Amber Hagerman was abducted while playing near her home in Arlington, Texas. and was later found murdered. Responding to community concern, the Texas Association of Radio Managers with the assistance of Law Enforcement, created the AMBER Plan to provide timely information about area child abductions to both the public and Law Enforcement. In October 2000 the U.S. House of Representatives adopted House Resolution #605 encouraging communities nationwide to implement the AMBER Plan and in the summer of 2001 the national Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) launched the "AMBER Plan" - America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response initiative nationwide. Nearly 300 children die at the hands of their non-family abductor each year, 76% percent are female just over 11 years old and are taken within a quarter mile of the victim's home. The majority is murdered within the first THREE hours of the abduction. The State of Mississippi has implemented a statewide alert plan in response to statistics like those cited above.

125.1.1 AMBER Alert System

- A. The AMBER Alert System is a method of rapid information dissemination through a cooperative effort between Law Enforcement, the Media and the Private Sector.
- B. Information on abductions is broadcasted using the existing Emergency Alert System (EAS) along with Television and Radio.
- C. Alerts are issued every thirty minutes for two hours and once an hour for the next three hours.
- D. The alert cycle will be reset upon receipt of new or updated information.
- E. The Alert message will contain an "800" and the cellular quick dial numbers.

125.1.2 Alert Criteria

- A. The missing person must be a child under the age of 18 or a mentally defective, mentally incapacitated, or physically helpless person.
- B. The abductor must be a non-family member.
- C. There has to be a very strong suspicion that the child is in imminent danger.
- D. There has to be good descriptive information about abductor, child and/or getaway vehicle.
- E. Missing adults (in general), runaways and children taken in custody disputes do not qualify

125.1.3 Plan Activation

- A. Time is of the essence in abduction cases. The Hattiesburg Police Department will respond to this type of call utilizing the same information gathering and response procedures that are applied to emergency calls for service.
- B. If the call taker acquires the information that meets the alert criteria, a preparatory call will be made to the Department of Public Safety Headquarters in Jackson, MS by the Communications Division. This will enable the system administrators to prepare the information for dissemination allowing for transmission upon authentication, decreasing delay time.
- C. Officers on the scene will investigate the call to determine if abduction has occurred.
 - 1. In the case of abduction (Amber Plan Activation),
 - a. The officer will provide the information required to complete the "Initial Reporting Form" to the Communications Division from the field.
 - b. The communicator shall complete the form, contact DPS to advise that this is an actual Amber Alert situation and forward per instructions on the form.
 - c. Department personnel will be notified by a BOLO, with the necessary information, transmitted via radio to all field units and pager system utilized for other personnel and administration.
 - d. Communications shall advise local surrounding agencies of the abduction and descriptors for dissemination to their personnel to enhance the notification system and ensure local saturation.
 - 2. If the event is not abduction, the officer will follow reporting and investigative procedures normally implemented for that type of event.
- D. Incident reports will be completed and filed in accordance with established reporting procedures of the Hattiesburg Police Department.