



<b>WRITTEN DIRECTIVE</b>	No. PD14-1902	Page: 1 of 10
Subject:  <b>Public Alert Systems</b>	Effective Date:	06-11-14
	Supersedes/ Amends:	PD14-1902
	Reference:	



## I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish Lynchburg Police Department criteria and procedures for disseminating public alert information by means to include, but not be limited to, Virginia’s AMBER Alert Plan and the A Child Is Missing Alert Program (ACIM).

## II. Policy

It shall be the policy of the Lynchburg Police Department to utilize public alert systems in situations that are deemed appropriate and are consistent with the guidelines established by Virginia’s AMBER Alert Plan Advisory Board and the A Child Is Missing Advisory Board.

## III. Public Notification Mechanisms

### A. Virginia AMBER Alert Plan

1. The AMBER Alert Plan is a broadcast media-based, interstate means of alerting the public to be on the lookout for abducted, actively endangered children.
2. AMBER Alert implementation criteria:
  - a. The abducted child must be 17 years of age or younger or is currently enrolled in a secondary school in the Commonwealth, regardless of age
  - b. The investigating law enforcement officer(s) must have reasonable belief that the:
    - 1) child had been abducted (unwillingly taken from his or her normal environment without permission from the child’s parent or legal guardian), *and*
    - 2) abducted child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death.
  - c. A law enforcement investigation has taken place that verified the abduction or eliminated alternative explanations.

- d. Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the child, suspect, and/or the suspect's vehicle.
  - e. The child must be entered into the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) missing person files as soon as practical.
  - f. If all of the above criteria are not met, the Virginia AMBER Alert Plan will not be activated.
3. LPD functional responsibilities in an AMBER Alert activation:
- a. A CID supervisor will be immediately notified in any case where it is believed that a child has been abducted under circumstances that place the child in danger of serious injury or death
  - b. The CID supervisor will assign at least one detective as a follow-up point of contact.
  - c. The assigned detective will take immediate action to verify that an abduction has occurred (or to eliminate alternative explanations), and to confirm that AMBER Alert criteria have been met.
  - d. The assigned detective will be responsible for:
    - 1) ensuring that the child is entered into the NCIC / VCIN systems as soon as practical
    - 2) contacting the Virginia State Police on-duty sergeant at 804-674-2026 to provide details regarding the AMBER Alert request.
      - a) The Virginia State Police oversees all AMBER Alert requests on behalf of the Virginia Missing Children Clearinghouse (VMCC) and will assist detectives with submitting the electronic AMBER Alert Request form accessed via the Virginia State Police web site.
    - 3) completing the electronic AMBER Alert Request form by accessing the Virginia State Police web site and by completing the following procedure:
      - a) Click on "AMBER Alert"
      - b) Click on "Log In" and enter the Lynchburg Police Department's VCIN ORI code (VA1140000) into both the User Name and Password fields.
      - c) Click on "Request Amber Alert" and complete the three part form by entering child, abductor, and agency information. This form allows users the ability to input the appropriate LPD Public Alert Response line telephone number (434) 455-4090.

- d) Click on "Submit Amber Alert" on the third page which will send the form electronically to the Virginia State Police Duty Sergeant.
- 4) forwarding a current photograph of the missing child (if available) to the Virginia Missing Children Clearinghouse (VMCC) manager at [vamissing@vsp.va.us](mailto:vamissing@vsp.va.us).
- e. The assigned CID supervisor will be responsible for:
  - 1) establishing and appropriately staffing an LPD Public Alert Response Line call center to monitor response lines and to record caller information for a minimum period of 24 hours following AMBER Alert activation, or until such time that the AMBER Alert is cancelled
    - a) To avoid a delay in activating call-takers, the Emergency eServices Director will be promptly notified to assist in establishing and overseeing the call center, which will generally be set up in the EOC at the Department of Emergency Services (DES) or at another designated call-taking facility approved by the Chief of Police.
    - b) Initial call center staffing will be provided by DES if staffing allows and through calling in one team of Crisis Negotiation Team officers.
    - c) A Crisis Negotiation Team or other LPD supervisor, once on scene will assume command of the call center.
    - d) The call center will generally be staffed by 4 call takers, until such time as call volume indicates that call taker staffing should be reduced or increased.
    - e) At times of high call volume, one or more stand-by call takers should remain available to relieve active call takers as necessary.
  - 2) coordinating LPD and multi-agency efforts to locate the missing child and to apprehend any identified suspect(s)
  - 3) ensuring that all case-related incident reports and paperwork are completed and reviewed in a timely manner
  - 4) providing updated information to the Virginia State Police (VMCC) and other law enforcement agencies as required
  - 5) providing the Virginia State Police (VMCC) with the LPD Public Alert Response Line telephone number (434-455-4090) as the AMBER Alert contact number
  - 6) ensuring that all call takers assigned to the Public Alert Response Line

call center at any time receive instruction on current details of the AMBER Alert incident, what information may be released to the public, what information should be captured and how that information should be logged or reported

- 7) utilizing the Virginia AMBER Alert Plan termination script in the event that the incident is terminated before the 12 hour alert cycle is completed
- 8) upon closure of the child abduction case, immediately providing the Virginia State Police (VMCC) with all information pertinent to closing the AMBER Alert.

4. Other functional responsibilities in an AMBER Alert activation:

- a. The Virginia State Police (VMCC) will confirm receipt of the *AMBER Alter Request* form and will proceed with activation procedures as outlined within the Virginia AMBER Alert Plan
- b. On receipt of notification, the Virginia State Police will contact the broadcasting companies through the Emergency Alert System (EAS) in accordance with procedures detailed within the Virginia AMBER Alert Plan.
- c. Subsequent AMBER Alert broadcasts:
  - 1) After the initial AMBER Alert information broadcast, the AMBER Alert Plan recommends rebroadcast:
    - a) every 15 minutes for the first two hour alert activation period, and
    - b) every 30 minutes for the subsequent three hour period.
  - 2) Once the first five hours have passed, broadcasters may provide the information and any updates on an hourly basis for the next seven hours.
  - 3) The decision to rebroadcast the AMBER Alert information will be left up to each individual broadcasting station and is completely voluntary.

B. A Child Is Missing (ACIM) Alert System

1. The A Child is Missing alert system:

- a. can be activated at any time an LPD supervisor determines that any segment of the public within or surrounding an established search perimeter would benefit from being informed about types of missing person situations, homeland security and natural disaster warnings, emergency situations affecting public safety, and attempts to locate or identify unknown or wanted persons (see III, B-2)

- b. is a telephone-based public notification system capable of contacting all listed telephone numbers within a user-defined alert perimeter.
  - 1) The alert perimeter is centered on:
    - a) the missing person's last known location (this location description must include the zip code), or
    - b) the site of the event generating the alert (this location description must include the zip code)
  - 2) The alert perimeter is sized according to:
    - a) the elapsed time since the missing person was last sighted by a reliable witness, or
    - b) the nature of the event generating the alert
- 2. A Child Is Missing alert activation criteria:
  - c. Missing or Runaway Juveniles
    - 1) The missing person must be under 21 years of age, as defined by the Code of Virginia.
    - 2) The reporting person must be a family member, teacher, or another adult who is responsible for the missing juvenile.
    - 3) If the juvenile is identified as a habitual runaway, ACIM should be used only in cases where:
      - a) criminal activity or endangerment is suspected, or
      - b) the missing person may be endangered by other cause (such as severe weather).
    - 4) A first time runaway can be reported with or without criminal activity or endangerment suspected.
  - d. Missing Senior Citizens
    - 1) The missing person must be:
      - a) 65 years of age or older and such absence is out of character, *or*
      - b) believed to be suffering from Alzheimer's Disease or a related cognitive impairment (regardless of age).

- 2) ACIM alerts may be initiated even in the case of elderly persons who are frequent walk-aways from their residence or healthcare facility.
- e. Missing Disabled Persons
- 1). The missing person must fall into one of the following disability categories:
    - a) The person has a physical or mental impairment that severely limits self-care.
    - b) The person is disoriented or unable to respond to simple questions related to personal information such as name and address.
    - c) The person is dependent upon regular access to life-sustaining medication or treatment.
  - 2) There is no age stipulation for a missing disabled person.
- f. ACIM alerts can also be utilized by law enforcement for public notifications in the following potential endangerment situations:
- 1) parental or stranger abductions
  - 2) pregnant females missing under unusual or unknown circumstances
  - 3) disaster or emergency situations that might involve or endanger juveniles
  - 4) unconscious persons located without identification
  - 5) situations involving predators or known sex offenders who may be stalking juveniles
  - 6) locating a child's parent or guardian, or locating an elderly or disabled person's guardian or responsible party
  - 7) safeguarding children from criminals at large.
- g. ACIM can also be utilized to broadcast press releases and public service messages related to the above-listed topic areas.
3. LPD functional responsibilities in an ACIM alert activation:
- a. A supervisor of Lieutenant or higher rank:
    - 1) must approve any ACIM alert system activation
    - 2) will monitor and direct the related missing person investigation

- 3) must monitor and approve any related follow-up communication with the ACIM alert control center.
- 4) will confer with the on-duty DES supervisor to determine whether the anticipated volume of public response calls:
  - a) can be handled using on-duty officers temporarily assigned to DES as call takers, or
  - b) requires activation of the LPD Public Alert Response Line call center.
- b. On determination that the LPD Public Alert Response Line call center will be activated:
  - 1) The Emergency Services Director will be promptly notified to assist in establishing and overseeing the call center, which will generally be set up in the EOC at the Department of Emergency Services (DES) or at another designated call-taking facility approved by the Chief of Police.
  - 2) Initial call center staffing will be provided by DES if staffing allows and by calling in one team of Crisis negotiation Team officers.
  - 3) A Crisis Negotiation Team or other LPD supervisor, once on scene will assume command of the call center.
  - 4) The call center in ACIM alert situations will generally be staffed by 2 call takers, until such time as call volume over time indicates that call taker staffing should be reduced or increased.
  - 5) At times of high call volume, one or more stand-by call takers should remain available to relieve active call takers as necessary.
- c. When the decision to utilize ACIM has been made, the investigating or other assigned officer will telephone ACIM at 1-888-875-ACIM (2246) or page the ACIM operator at 1-954-492-4778.
  - 1) The officer contacting the ACIM alert center will provide detailed information concerning the:
    - a) disappearance of the missing person, to include the zip code of the location where the missing person was last seen by a credible witness
    - b) nature of the event generating the alert, to include the zip code of the event location.

- 2) The contacting officer will provide ACIM with the LPD Public Alert Response Line telephone number (434-455-4090) for use by callers providing alert-related information.
- 3) The assigned supervisor will be responsible for:
  - a) ensuring that all ACIM alert call takers receive instruction on current details of the incident, what information may be released to the public, what information should be captured and how that information should be logged or reported
  - b) coordinating LPD and multi-agency efforts to locate the missing person or appropriately address the public safety situation
  - c) ensuring that all case-related incident reports and paperwork are completed and reviewed in a timely manner
  - d) providing updated information to ACIM and other involved agencies as required.
4. Investigating information received as result of ACIM alert broadcasts:
  - a. Information received from a citizen concerning a possible sighting of the missing person will be dispatched as soon as possible to patrol units, or to assigned follow-up detectives, as available.
  - b. Should information received suggest that alert information must be updated or broadcast to other geographic areas, the assigned supervisor will direct re-contacting the ACIM control center in order to issue a revised or additional alert.
5. Terminating ACIM alerts:
  - a. When the missing person is located, the assigned supervisor directing the investigation will direct the Information Desk to notify the ACIM control center that the situation is resolved.
  - b. The ACIM control center will fax a *Case Follow-Up Report* to the Information Desk.
    - 1) The assigned supervisor will review and approve the completed ACIM *Case Follow-Up Report* prior to its being forwarded to ACIM.
    - 2) After supervisor approval, Patrol Support staff:
      - a) will fax the form back to ACIM at 954-763-4569
      - b) will maintain a copy of the ACIM form on file.

- c. Use of the ACIM alert system will be documented in the assigned officer's incident report.

C. Procedures for handling incident-related call volume:

1. Prior to the broadcasting of any form of public alert, the on-duty watch commander (or the ranking CID supervisor overseeing an investigation) will determine whether such alert should include an alternate telephone number for citizens to call with information relating to the alert situation.
  - a. This preliminary decision will be based on factors to include the:
    - 1) type, impact and severity of the alert-related incident
    - 2) estimated level of public response that the alert is likely to generate over the short and long term
    - 3) need to maintain the capability of existing telecommunications staff to effectively handle regular communications workload.
  - b. The incident supervisor will confer with the on-duty DES supervisor and with other involved department staff as necessary to make an informed preliminary assessment of the need for supplemental call-handling resources.
2. In cases where an alternate public response telephone number is not designated within the initial public alert, the incident commander will maintain contact with the DES supervisor:
  - a. to monitor incident-related call volume
  - b. to assess the perceived need to provide additional call-taking resources.
3. At such time that an alternate public information telephone number is broadcast in an alert situation, and/or the incident commander and the DES supervisor determine that there is a need to provide additional telecommunications staffing:
  - a. The incident commander and the on-duty watch commander will coordinate the immediate assignment of additional on-duty sworn personnel as an interim call-taker resource.
  - b. Crisis Negotiation Team officers and Communications Specialists will be called out according to established procedures to respond to the DES or another designated call-taking facility approved by the Chief of Police to serve as supplementary call takers.
  - c. Supplemental call takers will be notified on call-out whether to respond to DES or to another designated call-taking facility.

4. Designated supplementary call takers will remain in place at their assignment location until:
  - a. replaced by designated relief staffing
  - b. relieved from duty by the Incident Commander.

*Original Signed*

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Parks H. Snead  
Chief of Police

June 11, 2014

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Date