

CALIFORNIA

# AMBER ALERT

America's Missing:  
Broadcast Emergency Response

## Activation Field Guide



## What Is AMBER Alert?

California's **A**merica's **M**issing: **B**roadcast **E**mergency **R**esponse Alert, or AMBER Alert, is a statewide program designed to facilitate immediate emergency responses to child abduction cases. It provides the protocols and procedures by which local law enforcement agencies may employ the broadcast media to immediately enlist public involvement in the safe recovery of the children and apprehension of the abductors. AMBER Alert is an integral part of the California Child Safety Amber Network (CCSAN), a comprehensive statewide program administered by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) that provides for a coordinated and rapid response to child abduction cases warranting immediate public attention.

This Activation Guide is designed as a reference summarizing the key steps to be taken by law enforcement when activating an AMBER Alert. Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to copy and distribute this Guide for use by personnel in the field and for general training purposes.

## Activation Criteria

After receiving a report of a child abduction, the responsible law enforcement agency must conduct a preliminary investigation and determine if the specified criteria for an AMBER Alert activation have been met.

All of the following conditions must apply:

- A confirmed abduction has occurred.
- The victim is 17 years of age or younger, or of proven mental or physical disability.
- The victim is reasonably believed by local law enforcement to be in **imminent** danger of serious bodily injury or death.
- There is information available that, if disseminated to the general public, could assist in the safe recovery of the victim.

Note: AMBER Alert is not intended for cases involving runaways, missing children in which there is no evidence of foul play, or custody disputes that are not reasonably believed to endanger the life or physical health of a child. However, agencies should continue to exercise their discretion when determining which of the many tools available would be the most appropriate for transmitting information and photos of missing children to other officers, the media and the public.

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## Step 1: Activate Emergency Alert System (EAS)

Once it is confirmed that all AMBER Alert criteria have been met, and there is no extenuating investigative need that dictates otherwise, activation of the EAS is required.

- To initiate a **multi-regional** or **statewide** EAS alert, contact the California Highway Patrol (CHP), Emergency Notification and Tactical Alert Center (ENTAC) at **(916) 657-8287**.
- To initiate a more localized, **regional** EAS alert, contact your pre-designated local primary radio station (LP-1) in accordance with your agency's regional EAS plan. If assistance is desired, contact ENTAC.
- Provide available summary information for the EAS message, including the name, age, sex, physical description and clothing of the victim and suspect, vehicle description, possible direction of travel and location and time last seen. Also include the agency's name and telephone number for the public to call with leads.

CAUTION: The EAS should be used only in time-critical circumstances in which local television and radio programming should be pre-empted by the emergency broadcast. Agencies should use proper discretion when deciding to activate the EAS in response to a child abduction.

## Step 2: Send an EDIS FLASH Message via CLETS

The EDIS FLASH message contains summary information regarding the child abduction for dissemination to other law enforcement agencies and media outlets statewide. The media will decide if, and in what priority, the message should be broadcast. This message must be sent in all cases in which EAS has been activated.

To send an EDIS FLASH message, transmit a Be-On-the-Look-Out (BOLO) Administrative Message via CLETS, using the AMBER Alert Users Group Code 4500. Following is a sample message in the prescribed format:

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E 001 4500

EDIS FLASH

SUBJECT: CHILD ABDUCTION (RIVER CITY)

REQUEST MEDIA BROADCASTS IMMEDIATELY

THE RIVER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT IS INITIATING A CHILD ABDUCTION ALERT. WE ARE REQUESTING THE PUBLIC'S ASSISTANCE IN LOCATING A 9 YR OLD WHITE FEMALE. HER NAME IS JAMIE SMITH. SHE HAS BLOND HAIR, BLUE EYES, IS 4' TALL AND WEIGHS 85 POUNDS. SHE WAS LAST SEEN WEARING A RED TOP AND BLACK PANTS. POLICE BELIEVE SHE WAS ABDUCTED BY A WHITE MALE, APPROXIMATELY 25-35 YEARS OLD, BROWN HAIR WITH A SHORT BEARD AND MUSTACHE. HE IS DRIVING A SILVER SUV, LAST SEEN HEADING NORTH TOWARDS INTERSTATE 80 FROM THE ARCADE AREA. IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL (916) 555-6543 IMMEDIATELY.

CONTACT DETECTIVE STEVE HILL, RIVER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT AT (916) 555-3456 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

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All text following the words "EDIS FLASH" will be relayed to the media and the public exactly as it was entered. Also, these words should not be preceded with multiple spaces, a quotation mark, asterisk or other characters. **Do not include any confidential information intended for law enforcement use only.**

Note: In addition to this step, agencies should continue to transmit a BOLO Administrative Message via CLETS in the prescribed format to initiate a regional law enforcement response to reported missing person cases, pursuant to Penal Code section 14205(a).

### **Step 3: Create a Child Abduction Poster on the Internet**

As soon as photos or sketches of the victim, suspect and/or vehicle are available, create a poster on the EDIS Web Site for direct access by the media and the public.

To enter data on a poster:

- Access the EDIS Web Site at: <http://edis.oes.ca.gov/amber/>.
- Select **Post Image (Victim, Suspect or Vehicle)** as appropriate.
- Enter your agency's pre-assigned EDIS User ID and password.
- Enter all available information in the appropriate data fields on the template provided. (Remember that this information will be read by the media and the public; use plain language and avoid law enforcement abbreviations, codes, etc.). **Do not enter any confidential information intended for law enforcement use only.**

To import an image to a poster:

- Click **Browse** located on the Post Image screen. This will display a pop-up dialog box listing various files in your computer from which you may import an image. Double-click on the file containing the image to be imported. The file name will be shown in the "Image File to Post" data field. (Note: Images must be in JPEG or GIF format and may not exceed 250 KB.) The image will be uploaded automatically when you submit the template form.
- Click **Post Image** located at the bottom of the screen. A draft of the poster containing the image and information will be displayed. Carefully review the poster for accuracy.
- Click **OK**, if the information is accurate (or press **Cancel** to correct any information).

The poster has been added to the EDIS Web Site. This will generate EDIS and CLETS messages notifying law enforcement and the media that the poster is available. The poster will also be accessible to the public at [www.edis.ca.gov](http://www.edis.ca.gov).

If your agency does not have an EDIS user account or is otherwise unable to create a poster on the EDIS Web Site, you may e-mail your image(s) and data to CHP's ENTAC at [erchq@chp.ca.gov](mailto:erchq@chp.ca.gov). This process should be coordinated with CHP at (916) 657-8287.

### **Step 4: Initiate Alert Updates/Cancellations as appropriate**

Any updates or cancellations of an AMBER Alert should be sent to all affected agencies on a timely basis.

Transmit the appropriate information

via CLETS in the form of an EDIS FLASH, using the same format as specified

in Step 2. Original EDIS messages can not be modified once they are transmitted; therefore, any corrections or updates to the messages require a new transmission.

To include new images or information on a poster stored on the EDIS Web Site, repeat Step 3 to create a new poster; posters stored on the EDIS Web Site can not be modified. Law enforcement and the media automatically will be notified when new posters are created. Posters will be retained for up to four weeks, as specified by the user during the poster creation process.

Call the CHP's ENTAC at (916) 657-8287 for assistance in canceling an AMBER Alert.

## Resources

**California Highway Patrol** (800) TELL-CHP (835-5247)  
www.chp.ca.gov  
• **Emergency Notification and Tactical Alert Center (ENTAC)** (916) 657-8287  
E-mail: erchq@chp.ca.gov

**Governor's Office of Emergency Services**  
www.oes.ca.gov  
• **OES 24 hr Warning Center** (800) 421-2921 or (916) 845-8911  
• **EDIS Program** (916) 845-8610  
www.edis.ca.gov  
info@edis.oes.ca.gov

**Office of the Attorney General**  
**California Department of Justice**  
• **24-hr Command Center** (916) 227-3244  
• **Violent Crime Information Center** (916) 227-3280  
• **Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit** (916) 227-3290, (24 hour)  
www.ag.ca.gov/missing (916) 227-3270 (fax)  
E-mail: missing.persons@doj.ca.gov  
24 hour Missing Children Hotline: (800) 222-FIND (222-3463)  
TRAK (916) 227-2761  
• **Investigative Services Program** (916) 227-4736  
• **Sex Offender Tracking Program** (916) 227-3288  
• **Office of Victim's Services** (877) 433-9069 (toll free)  
• **Crime and Violence Prevention Center** (916) 324-7863  
www.ag.ca.gov/cvpc

**Federal Bureau of Investigation**  
- Los Angeles (310) 477-6565  
- Sacramento (916) 481-9110  
- San Diego (619) 514-5500  
- San Francisco (415) 553-2000

**National Center for Missing and Exploited Children** 1-(800) THE-LOST (843-5678)  
www.missingkids.com

**TRAK - Technology to Recover Abducted Kids** 1-(800) 724-8725  
www.trak.org