

THE AMBER ADVOCATE

ISSUE 2 2020

AMBER ALERT TRAINING

BROUGHT TO A TOWN - OR COMPUTER -
NEAR YOU



AMBER[®]
ALERT

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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AMBER ALERT TRAINING

BROUGHT TO A TOWN – OR COMPUTER – NEAR YOU



Dallas Police Detective and AATTAP Child Sex Trafficking Course Coordinator Cathy Delapaz at the two-day training in Springfield, Missouri

Missouri law enforcement receives training, specifically designed for their jurisdictional and geographic needs, on effective response to sex trafficking crimes against children

This training on the law enforcement response to child sex trafficking was not for the faint of heart. More than 180 people listened to case study summaries and evidence-based information on how child sex trafficking victims may be reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement officers, or to assist with the investigation because of shame, or from fear that they or their families will be harmed by the traffickers. This is largely due to bonds forged through trauma and fear. These child victims, whose average age is 14–15, are repeatedly forced into commercial sexual exploitation through coercion or physical violence.

The two-day training in Springfield, Missouri, on January 28-29, 2020, is one example of the individualized instruction the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) can offer a community through its broad array of course offerings.

A CUSTOMIZED TRAINING EXPERIENCE

The overarching goal of targeted training such as that developed for Springfield is to provide

customized information and resources which support local/area law enforcement and the community it serves in developing an effective approach to understanding, rescuing, and appropriately serving the recovery needs of victims of sex trafficking. Representatives from law enforcement, child protection, medical, juvenile services, and non-profit groups united over the two-day training to develop a response protocol specific to the dynamics of sex trafficking occurring in the community.

Developed by Byron Fassett, AATTAP Program Manager, and Cathy Delapaz, Dallas Police Detective and AATTAP Child Sex Trafficking Course Coordinator, this training and its customized application for these Missouri participants was developed from a follow up request for additional training following a “Child Sex Trafficking Training for First Responders” course provided by Delapaz in 2019.

Fassett, who has more than 25 years’ experience in investigating child sex abuse cases, shared studies that found 80% of victims ran away

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AMBER ALERT TRAINING

BROUGHT TO A TOWN – OR COMPUTER – NEAR YOU

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four or five times in a one-year period. He urged law enforcement officers and social workers to probe deeper into the elements at play when a child runs away. Fassett said traffickers seek out vulnerable teens living on the streets, luring them with offers of food, shelter, clothing, and other basic needs.

“It’s a process. They are first going to overwhelm them with love, affection, and attention,” said Fassett. “After they’ve pulled them in that way, then they will introduce the need for money.”

He said the victim is unscrupulously led to believe the perpetrator is owed something and paints a romantic picture of how they are working together as a team.

“Pimps call it selling the dream,” said Fassett. “And if that doesn’t work, the trafficker will use force.”

The group was provided evidence-based and results-oriented methods for identifying victims of sex trafficking, as well as those at high risk of luring and exploitation. The training included instruction and group discussion around discipline-specific victim interview techniques, and important elements in the documentation and reporting processes to support effective prosecution of perpetrators.

Delapaz shared what she has learned through years of helping sex trafficking victims. She noted that crimes commonly associated with child sex trafficking include sexual assault, child abduction, drug trafficking, robberies, and other violent crimes.

“Traffickers are a public safety danger,” said Delapaz. “Any child who is a runaway is at high risk of falling prey to traffickers. These traffickers must be met with the same response with which we meet any other exploiter of children.”

“Time is of the essence, these children must be rescued and saved from endless acts of exploitation. These are not cases where we can afford to take weeks to work; they are as pressing as an abduction or other situation in which an exploiter has access to a child.”

Delapaz explained it is crucial for communities to have an established team approach for these victims which is seamless, efficient, and quick.

In Springfield and across the nation, AATTAP works with state, regional, and local partners to develop an event and curriculum resources which best meets their child protection and community safety needs. Whether spearheaded by law enforcement agencies or the public safety and child protection organizations with whom they partner in local, grass-roots endeavors, AATTAP audiences receive carefully constructed training like that provided to the dedicated professionals and community members of Springfield.

“Communities which develop a robust, impactful response to child sex trafficking victims will see a dramatic increase in recoveries of victims, disclosures of exploitation during interviews, prosecution of traffickers, and development of relevant long-term services for victims,” said Delapaz. These AATTAP trainers began with two goals for this course, as they do for all such

trainings and presentations: 1) Share impactful information which resonates with participants; and 2) connect with the experience and situations in the participating community, to support their ability to practically and effectively apply the information.

“We were able to accomplish both goals,” added Delapaz in reflecting on the two days spent with the participants in Springfield.

LESSONS FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES

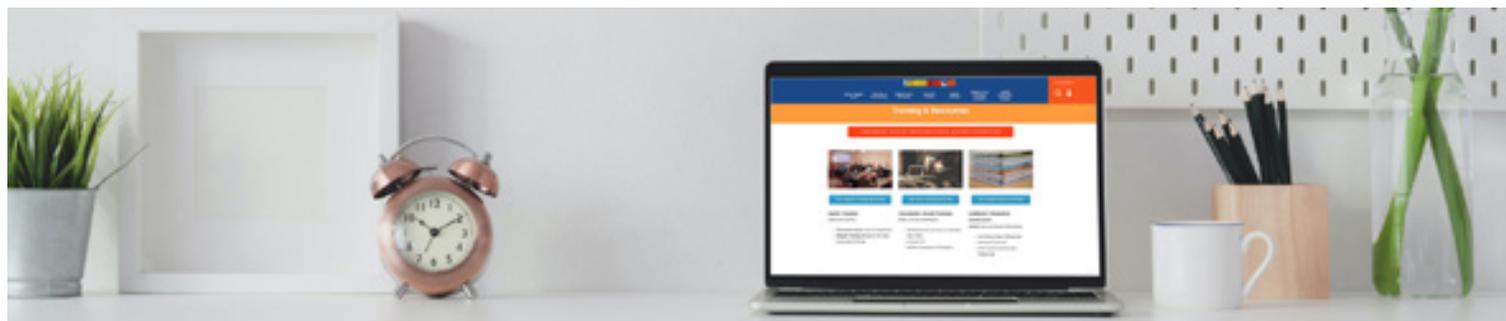
AATTAP is an initiative of the U.S. Department of Justice and is administered through Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) and its National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC). AATTAP provides a variety of in-person and online (both live webinars and self-directed) training opportunities to help law enforcement, other child protection professionals, and the community better understand and ready themselves to effectively respond to endangered missing and abducted children.

Trainings like what was offered in Springfield, developed out of the Child Sex Trafficking topical area, focus on understanding and identifying high risk victims, children in crisis, and the commercial exploitation of youth; and the critical importance of rescue and recovery work as victims and their families endure prosecutorial/judicial aspects of the case and forge a plan for long-term recovery.

These training events have outcomes geared toward powerful collaboration, development of effective policies and procedures, and the identification and application of best practices to safely recover endangered missing and abducted children.

AMBER Alert training courses can be hosted by local, regional, state, and tribal law enforcement training academies, agencies, or organizations. AATTAP encourages collaboration between law enforcement, public safety, and non-profit partners to identify training needs for each community.

AATTAP’s courses address numerous subjects, including effective first response to and investigation of endangered missing and abducted child incidents; child sex trafficking investigations and interdisciplinary community readiness to respond; AMBER Alert in Indian Country, Child Abduction Response Teams (CART), and many other important topics. Learn more, request training, and register for scheduled training events (both classroom and online) at the AMBER Advocate website’s Training and Resources area: <https://www.amberadvocate.org/training-resources/>.



AMBER ALERT ON THE FRONT LINES:



CITIZENS SPRING TO ACTION AFTER MASSACHUSETTS ISSUES ITS FIRST AMBER ALERT FOR A STRANGER ABDUCTION

VICTIM'S FAMILY SAYS THE OUTPOURING OF LOVE AND SUPPORT IS OVERWHELMING

Maggie Kenney was sitting on her front porch when she saw a man grab a young girl and push her into his car. She immediately started screaming at her husband to call the cops.

"I'm screaming, yelling to wake up the neighborhood," said Kenney to a reporter. "(The girl) was saying 'Stop! Put me down!' It was terrible."

The abduction took place at 1:26 p.m. on January 15, 2020, in Springfield, Massachusetts. The 11-year-old was taken while she was walking home after getting off her school bus. Kenney told police the abductor was driving a blue two-door Honda Civic.

Detectives searched the area and found a home security camera had captured video of the suspect's vehicle and the victim moments before the abduction. The video also showed the same vehicle following the girl the day before.

The Springfield Police Department (SPD) media relations officer began contacting local news outlets and posting information on social media about the stranger abduction while detectives prepared information for an AMBER Alert. SPD and the Massachusetts State Police (MSP) coordinated swiftly to move the AMBER Alert activation forward. MSP provided activation guidance at 3:35 p.m. SPD submitted photos of the suspect's vehicle to MSP by 4:14 p.m.

The police department issued a press release at 5:15 p.m. with the name, age, a physical description, and photographs of the endangered child, along with the location and time she was last seen, and a description of the suspect vehicle. The AMBER Alert was issued at 5:20 p.m.

“A child’s life and safety is at stake and we want to engage the public across our entire state, so everyone can help us look for that child and the person who abducted her,” said Sergeant Nicole Morell, Massachusetts AMBER Alert Coordinator.

The MSP sends AMBER Alerts to law enforcement via directed messages and broadcasts, and to the public through television and radio broadcasts, website and social media pages, and public transit stations and electronic highway signs. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) also deliver these critical messages and updates to the public.

“This was the first stranger abduction in Massachusetts since the AMBER Alert system was implemented in this state in 2002,” said Dave Procopio, MSP Media Communications Director. “Naturally, there was great concern for this child’s safety, and a determination by everyone involved in the process at MSP that we would keep working until she was found.”

Emergency dispatchers were flooded with calls, including numerous motorists who said they spotted

the suspect’s car, beginning around 7:15 p.m. The license plate number information received from tips was fed into automated license plate reader (ALPR) systems to locate the vehicle. MSP Troopers also started slowing the traffic in that area by reducing the highway to one lane.

Amanda Disley and her husband saw the vehicle and started following it. Their son was in the back of the car live-streaming the event.

“I hope they find that girl, I really do,” Disley said in the video “It’s got me sick to my stomach. I cannot imagine being that mom. I can’t imagine how that mom feels.”

They lost sight of the car, but other motorists called 911 to report the vehicle was fleeing from the city of Chicopee. State troopers stopped the vehicle at 7:20 p.m. and arrested the 24-year-old perpetrator. The missing girl was recovered safely from the back seat. Troopers found a knife in the car door pocket.

“I felt tremendous relief,” said Procopio. “The AMBER Alert only works when civilians take time to listen to the information and commit themselves to remain alert as they go about their lives. That is what happened in this case, and we are eternally grateful to the civilians who helped us rescue this girl and apprehend her abductor.”

Springfield Police Commissioner Cheryl Clapprood held a press



Massachusetts AMBER Alert Coordinator
Sergeant Nicole Morell

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FACES OF THE AMBER ALERT NETWORK



TENNESSEE AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR SAYS THERE IS NO GREATER REWARD THAN RECOVERING A CHILD IN HARM'S WAY

Shelly Smitherman is the Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) Criminal Intelligence Unit/ Fusion Center. She

oversees the AMBER Alert/Endangered Child Program, Human Trafficking analysts, and the Tennessee Sex Offender Registry. Smitherman has been with the TBI for 18 years and has worked in the Middle Tennessee Drug Division, Training Division, and Criminal Intelligence Unit.

Shelly received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Belmont University. She is also a graduate from the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy and LEAD Tennessee.

ASAC Smitherman began her career with the State of Tennessee in 1996 as a case manager with the Department of Children's Services (DCS). While employed at DCS, she conducted severe child physical and sexual abuse investigations. In 1999, she was hired by the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission as a Special Agent.

Shelly lives in Nashville, Tennessee. She is the proud mother of 2 children (ages 18 and 14) and 4 dogs.

WHAT IS UNIQUE TO YOUR AMBER ALERT PROGRAM AND WHAT DO YOU THINK HELPS MAKE IT SUCCESSFUL?

We have an amazing team at TBI that supports our AMBER Alert program in Tennessee. We have 16 intelligence analysts who are on-call and assist with AMBER Alerts. Team members train together regularly to ensure we are always ready to respond quickly when an AMBER Alert is issued.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO FIND MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?

I am humbled to oversee the Tennessee AMBER Alert/Missing Children Program. There is no greater reward than being part of locating a child who is in harm's way; this has been the most rewarding job in all my 23 years of state service. Every recovered child is a reminder of the critical importance of the AMBER Alert.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN MAINTAINING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND STRENGTH OF YOUR AMBER ALERT PROGRAM?

Although we have little turnover in our unit, it is difficult to keep local law enforcement trained on the protocol for issuing an alert, due to changing personnel. We provide onsite training across the state throughout the year to ensure law enforcement officers are aware of the requirements for AMBER Alert issuance. The training includes guidelines for preparing local agencies before a child abduction occurs in their communities.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN WITH YOUR AMBER ALERT PROGRAM IN THE FUTURE? WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE PROGRAM?

I am always communicating with my AMBER Alert partners from other states and searching for the best technology we can utilize to notify the public rapidly and provide as much detail as possible in order to resolve missing children cases quickly. We have recently updated our WEA message through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) that directs the public to the TBI Twitter page. This allows us to quickly provide details to every cell phone in the state.

PLEASE SHARE DETAILS ABOUT YOUR MOST MEMORABLE SUCCESS STORY IN WORKING A MISSING CHILD CASE. HOW DID THE AMBER ALERT SUPPORT THE OUTCOME? WHAT WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED?

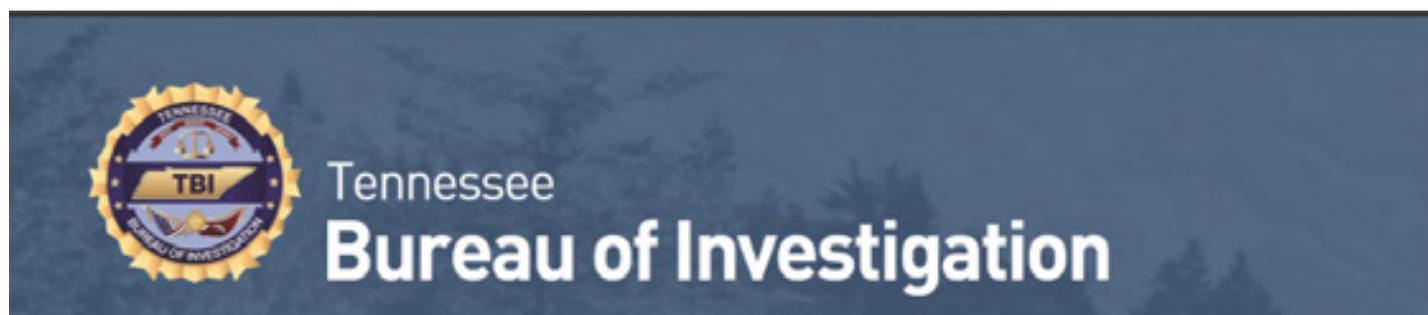
We had a recent AMBER Alert that involved a 12-year-old victim who was safely recovered by law enforcement. This case reminded everyone of the importance of agencies working together for one goal - the safe return of the child. The recovery of the victim was a result of successful collaboration between several local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. The child was recovered at a building in Nashville that had a billboard directly outside displaying the AMBER Alert poster from NCMEC.

HOW HAVE YOUR CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING YOUR WORK AS AN AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR, STRENGTHENED YOUR COMMITMENT TO HELPING ENDANGERED MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?

In my 23 years of working for the state of Tennessee, I have had the opportunity to work a variety of investigations that have prepared me for this role as the AMBER Alert Coordinator.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER AMBER ALERT PARTNERS?

I urge other AMBER Alert Coordinators to build relationships with their counterparts from other states. I have also developed great relationships with the people at the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College, as well as with NCMEC; they have been great partners in coordinating various training events in Tennessee for local, state, and federal agencies. 🌟



AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY



Tyeshia Wood, Project Coordinator, AMBER Alert Training & Technical Assistance Program and ITCN Council Members

INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL OF NEVADA QUARTERLY MEETING

On January 31, 2020, AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program and AMBER Alert in Indian Country (AATTAP-AIIC) team members Tyeshia Wood and Tanea Parmenter attended the quarterly meeting of the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada (ITCN) in Sparks, Nevada. During this meeting, they provided a brief presentation on the Ashlyne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act of 2018 and the ongoing efforts by AATTAP-AIIC to support its implementation. The ITCN is

comprised of members from the 27 tribes in Nevada. The purpose of the Council is to promote opportunities for the tribes and to assist with the tribe's partnerships with local and state organizations. AATTAP-AIIC staff will continue to collaborate with the ITCN council members and assist tribes in developing programs that protect children and support the work being done with missing and exploited children programs in their communities. ☺

WYOMING PASSES LAW TO HELP FIND MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Wyoming law enforcement agencies are now required to collect more information and better collaborate across jurisdictions on cases involving missing or murdered Native Americans. Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon signed a bill on March 9, 2020, that will also help the state's two tribes implement their own AMBER Alert systems. The legislation requires Wyoming law enforcement to include biographical

information on reports to give the state better data on the number of missing and murdered Indigenous people.

"For the Eastern Shoshone and the Northern Arapaho, we all have our stories," said Wyoming Legislative Representative Andi Clifford, an enrolled member of the Northern Arapaho Tribe. "This is a step in the right direction." ☺



AATTAP-AIIC Team Members and Representatives from the Wyoming State Patrol and Wind River Inter-Tribal Council

WIND RIVER INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL AMBER ALERT IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

On March 11, 2020, the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program and AMBER Alert in Indian Country (AATTAP-AIIC) team, in partnership with the Wyoming State AMBER Alert Program, conducted a one-day AMBER Alert in Indian Country Implementation Meeting with the Wind River Inter-Tribal Council in Fort Washakie. The Wind River Inter-Tribal Council is comprised of members from the two tribes on the Wind River Indian Reservation, Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho, which combined have approximately 12,500 total enrolled members. Representatives from the Wind River Indian Community, Wind River Police Department, and surrounding state and county law enforcement agencies were also in attendance. The purpose of this meeting was to bring together representatives from Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho, and the Wyoming State AMBER Alert Program, to develop strategies for implementing AMBER Alert Plans for tribes in the aftermath of a child abduction.

During this meeting, staff from the Wyoming State AMBER Alert Program provided a presentation on its missing persons programs and resources, specifically explaining the protocol for working collaboratively to request and issue an AMBER Alert. Presenters emphasized their continued commitment to cooperate and assist the Wind River Indian Reservation and the Wind River Chief of Police with continued AMBER Alert training. The Wind River Tribal Community representatives and State Representatives also met to discuss state resources and valuable information to ensure a cooperative effort to enhance response in the event of an endangered missing or abducted child. The meeting concluded with a discussion of the role and duties of a possible AMBER Alert Coordinator within the Tribe to represent the Wind River Indian Community, and with concurrence to work with the Wyoming AMBER Alert Program on development of an AMBER Alert activation plan for the Tribe. 🌟

AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

AMBER ALERTS NOW POSTED ON ATMs THROUGHOUT EUROPE

AMBER Alert Europe has partnered with a technology company for AMBER Alerts to be seen on 23,000 ATM screens across Europe, with the potential of being viewed by millions of users and others passing by. The concept began in the Netherlands with Euronet Worldwide in the summer of 2019. "This partnership will significantly increase the amount of exposure that missing children will receive," said Frank Hoen, AMBER Alert Europe Chairman and Founder. "I am certain this will save children's lives in the future." 🌟

LARGE REWARD LEADS TO ARRESTS IN ABDUCTION AND MURDER OF 7-YEAR-OLD GIRL IN MEXICO CITY

A couple was arrested after the Attorney General of Mexico City offered a 2 million peso reward (approximately \$80,000 USD) for information leading to the capture of the people involved with kidnapping and killing a 7-year-old girl.

A woman picked up the girl from her elementary school on February 11, 2020, and said she was going to take her home. Surveillance video shows the woman and girl walking down the street. Five days later the child was found deceased in a garbage bag.

Police say the woman gave the girl as a "gift" to her abusive husband. The child was killed when the husband saw a TV report of her disappearance and the active police search. An autopsy revealed the child had been sexually assaulted before her death. The Mexican Public Ministry is seeking the maximum penalty for both the abductor and the murderer, a sentence of 70 years each. 🌟

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA NOW A PART OF AMBER ALERT EUROPE

The southeastern European country of Bosnia-Herzegovina is now part of the continent's child abduction alert program. The country is the 21st to join AMBER Alert Europe, which now has 34 participating organizations. "By joining we want to contribute to quickly and successfully solving missing children cases through cooperation with colleagues from other countries," said Mirsad Vilić, Director for Coordination for Police Bodies of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country is also joining the Police Expert Network on Missing Persons, a network that allows law enforcement to quickly consult with members in other countries on missing persons. 🌟

PAKISTAN LAUNCHES CHILD ABDUCTION ALERT PROGRAM

Pakistan now has a “Mera Bacha Alert” to help recover missing children. The system uses a mobile application to send details about a missing child to smart phones. The alert is part of the Digital Pakistan Vision program which was launched in 2018 to help empower women. 🌟

BELIZE POLICE UPDATE THE CRITERIA FOR JASMINE ALERTS

The Central American country of Belize is changing the criteria for the Jasmine Alert, a nationwide alert that is sent to the public when a child is missing or abducted. The Belize Police Department signed an MOU with the Jasmine Alert program to clarify the alert’s criteria, so it is aligned with the AMBER Alert criteria used in most countries. The Jasmine Alert program was started in 2012 after the disappearance of 13-year-old Jasmine Lowe, who was later found deceased. 🌟

NEW PRESIDENT APPOINTED TO EUROPE’S MISSING PERSON NETWORK

Damjan Miklič, senior criminal police inspector specialist at the Slovenian Police Directorate, has been appointed as president of Europe’s Police Expert Network on Missing Persons. The network consists of more than 50 law enforcement experts in the field of missing persons, specifically children, from 21 European countries. 🌟

AMBER ALERT BRIEFS

TENNESSEE AUTHORITIES WARN AGAINST FRAUDULENT AMBER ALERT DONATION SITE

The Sullivan County Sheriff's Office in Tennessee issued a warning not to support a GoFundMe page connected to a missing 15-month-old girl. On February 19, 2020, the sheriff's office issued an AMBER Alert after 18-year-old Megan Boswell reported her daughter was missing. On February 23, the sheriff's office said a donation site that claimed to be connected to the investigation was fraudulent and it was not authorized to use the agency's name. On March 6, the child was found dead, ending a 17-day-search in 3 states. The mother is now charged with making a false report. ↪

PENNSYLVANIA CONSIDERING MISSING ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY SYSTEM

A Pennsylvania legislator wants law enforcement agencies to immediately issue a Missing Endangered Person Advisory when a parent or family member reports an abduction. Representative Anthony DeLuca is calling the change to the AMBER Alert program the "Nalani Johnson Rule," named after a two-year-old girl who was kidnapped and murdered on August 31, 2019. DeLuca said the child's father reported the child missing with information about the kidnapper, vehicle, and direction they were traveling. He said the alert was delayed for hours because the approved criteria for an AMBER Alert had not been met. ↪

SUBJECT OF FLORIDA'S OLDEST AMBER ALERT IS STILL MISSING

A boy who was eight years old when Florida issued an AMBER Alert on September 11, 2000, remains missing. Zachary Bernhardt would now be 28 years old; the case is the longest-running AMBER Alert in the state. Investigators continue to look for Bernhardt and seven other children still missing after alerts were issued on their behalf. ↪

MISSOURI AUTHORITIES ASK THE PUBLIC TO SIGN UP FOR UPGRADED AMBER ALERT SYSTEM

The Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) is encouraging residents to subscribe to 'Mo-Alerts' for immediate receipt of AMBER Alerts issued in the state. MSHP launched the upgraded AMBER Alert system in December 2019 which streamlines the process for faster public alerting. The new system was first used on January 17, 2020, for a 2-year-old child. A resident saw the AMBER Alert and the child was located minutes after the alert was issued. Missouri residents can sign up at moalerts.mo.gov/. 

SISTER OF ABDUCTION VICTIM PUSHES FOR BILL ALLOWING POLICE TO SEARCH DNA DATABASES FOR VIOLENT CRIMINALS

In June 2000, 16-year-old Molly Bish was abducted and murdered in Massachusetts. Her killer has never been found. Twenty years later, her sister Heather Bish continues to pursue justice by advocating for legislation that allows law enforcement to search for violent criminals on DNA databases, using familial searches. "The beauty of familial testing is, it's science. It doesn't wrongly convict anyone," Heather Bish said. 

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATORS SEEK HIT-AND-RUN ALERTS

A group of New Jersey state representatives created a "Zack Alert" to notify the public when a person flees from an accident causing serious injuries or death. The lawmakers began pursuing the bill after 21-year-old Zachary Simmons was killed by a hit-and-run driver in Hoboken in 2016; Zackary's Law was enacted in January 2020. 

AMBER ALERT ON THE FRONT LINES:

Continued from page 7

conference after the ordeal was over. "What happened is I think every parent's worst nightmare," she said. "The biggest factor [in the safe recovery] was the assistance of the public. The tips coming in were amazing."

MSP has issued 28 AMBER Alerts involving 36 children and has a 100% rate of safe recovery. Apart from the January 15, 2020, alert, the other 27 AMBER Alerts issued to date in Massachusetts all involved perpetrators who were known to the abducted child or members of the child's family.

As information started coming in about the stranger abduction, the Massachusetts AMBER Alert Coordinator was actively communicating with coordinators in other states. At the same time MSP was responding to this abduction, Rhode Island was preparing to issue a Senior Alert. Morell said the strong relationships with other AMBER Alert partners helps make each state's program work better.

"The process works; trust it," added Morell. "Trust your instincts, your knowledge, and expertise. This being our first stranger abduction, we knew we had to work fast to get accurate information out to the public."

MSP determined years ago to release information about a possible abduction to the public as soon as possible. This results in more people looking for the victim sooner and provides the media much-needed information when the AMBER Alert is issued.

"We realized that the news and information flow is continuous and, in an emergency, needs to be as instantaneous as possible," said Procopio. "A child's safety and life are at stake, and we want to engage the public across our entire state, so they are helping us look for that child and the person who abducted her. An AMBER Alert activation has a lot of moving parts, and it's important that everyone involved knows their unique responsibilities and fulfills them satisfactorily and as quickly as possible."

An after-action review found everyone fulfilled their roles well, but determined the AMBER Alert protocol and intake/request form need to be updated to reflect current technology.

The abductor in this case was charged with 3 counts of aggravated rape of a child with force, indecent assault, battery, kidnapping, witness intimidation, and assault with a dangerous weapon on a child under the age of 14. The judge in the case ordered a psychiatric evaluation for him.

The victim's parents issued a statement to thank the motorists who followed the suspect "for their vigilance and courage for putting themselves in harm's way to make sure she wasn't out of their sight." They also thanked the law enforcement officers, doctors, social workers, and everyone involved in the AMBER Alert. "The outpouring of love and support, near and far, is overwhelming. We are eternally grateful." ☺