

Washington Statewide **AMBER Alert Plan**



America's
Missing
Broadcast
Emergency
Response

The Washington Statewide AMBER Alert Plan is named for 9-year-old Amber Hagerman of Arlington, Texas. In 1996, she was abducted while riding her bicycle and brutally murdered.

This Plan organizes a rapid response by law enforcement, broadcasters, and the public to recover an abducted child and apprehend the suspect.

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1. Introduction

AMBER Alert in Washington is a program of voluntary cooperation among broadcasters; cable systems; cellular phone systems [Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA)]; social media pages and sites; local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies; state agencies; and other participants to enhance the public's ability to assist in recovering abducted children. AMBER Alert notification is supported by notification of the public and media through e-mail subscriptions, activation of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), and—when vehicle information is available—the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA). The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has authorized activation of the EAS for AMBER Alerts using the “Child Abduction Emergency” CAE code.

2. Scope and Authority of Statewide AMBER Alert Plan

The Washington Statewide AMBER Alert Plan is authorized by RCW 13.60.010. The Washington Statewide AMBER Alert Plan solely governs and authorizes the use of EAS, WEA, and other methods available for public notification for AMBER Alerts throughout Washington State.

3. Approval of Local AMBER Alert Plans

A local AMBER Alert Plan must be approved by the State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC).

4. AMBER Alert Activation Approval and Scope

Approval for activation of an AMBER Alert will be by the investigating law enforcement agency, contingent on the agency having an existing approved local AMBER Alert Plan. No further review of the decision is required.

Investigating law enforcement agencies that do not have an approved plan may use an agency with an approved plan through established mutual aid agreements. Otherwise, the Washington State Patrol (WSP) will be the approving agency. No other organizations are authorized to approve AMBER Alert activations.

The WSP (and agencies approving Alerts for other agencies through mutual aid agreements) is accountable to provide timely activation decisions that are consistent with this Plan's criteria and cognizant of the circumstances.

All AMBER Alert activations of the EAS, WEA, and any other means will be statewide in scope.

When a law enforcement agency with an approved AMBER Alert Plan has determined that an incident qualifies for the activation of an AMBER Alert, the agency must notify the WSP. The WSP Communications Center that covers the approving agency area of responsibility will make the notifications. As a backup or as an advisor, the AMBER Alert Coordinator can also make the notifications. The WSP, as the sole point of contact, will coordinate all AMBER Alert activities with the Washington State Emergency Management Division and the Department of Transportation on the local law enforcement agency's behalf.

5. Training

All law enforcement agencies (to include any supporting Public Safety Answering Points, or PSAPs) with approved plans or those with Memoranda of Agreement with agencies with approved plans should complete initial training and/or refresher training on AMBER Alert criteria and how to request activation through the WSP.

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6. Operation

Following authorized approval of AMBER Alert activation and notification to the WSP:

- The Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD) will activate EAS for an AMBER Alert and is the only agency authorized to do so. EMD shall also send an AMBER Alert ACCESS (A Central Computerized Enforcement Service System) administrative text message.
- The WSP Communications Center for the activating agency area of jurisdiction will make the entry, updates, and cancellations via the Portal or other systems that may be adopted.
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) call center will receive the AMBER Alert via e-mail. NCMEC, in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), will activate the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. ONLY if there is license plate information available to identify a possible suspect vehicle.
- Information will also be posted on the WSP Twitter and Facebook pages to assist in dissemination.

The investigating law enforcement agency will identify a point of contact for media and other law enforcement agencies at the time of activation. The WSP Government and Media Relations office can be contacted for assistance with the media.

When an incident does not qualify under the criteria for an AMBER Alert, the law enforcement agency may follow the *Endangered Missing Person Advisory (EMPA) Plan*.

The WSP, for coordination purposes only, is the single point of contact for a local law enforcement agency to request an activation of an AMBER Alert in another state. Law enforcement agencies with an approved plan or Memoranda of Agreement, or the WSP for agencies with no approved plans, have approval authority in Washington; however, the state receiving the request will evaluate the AMBER Alert criteria and make their own decision whether or not to approve activation of the alert in their state.

The WSP is the single point of contact for requests for activation of an AMBER Alert from another state. All requests for activation of an AMBER Alert in Washington from an out-of-state law enforcement agency must be submitted to the WSP for evaluation of compliance with the AMBER Alert criteria set forth in this Plan.

7. Governance of the Statewide AMBER Alert Plan

Local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies, broadcasters, emergency management officials, and the Department of Transportation combine their efforts through the following Statewide AMBER Alert governance model to recover abducted children:

- **State AMBER Alert Manager**
The WSP is the lead agency for the Washington Statewide AMBER Alert Plan. The Chief of the WSP is the State AMBER Alert Manager and has final decision-making authority over all aspects of the Statewide AMBER Alert Plan.

While the Chief of the WSP is ultimately accountable for program success, this responsibility is shared with other entities that form the AMBER Alert Advisory Committee.

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- **State AMBER Alert Coordinator**

The AMBER Alert Coordinator is responsible for managing the operations of and procedures for the AMBER Alert notification process. The AMBER Alert Coordinator also serves as a backup to WSP Communications for Alert information dissemination when available during an Alert. Any recommended changes or improvements to the notification methods and processes will be made through the AMBER Alert Advisory Committee to the AMBER Alert Manager for approval.

The AMBER Alert Coordinator is also the single point of contact for Washington State with the Department of Justice and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in regard to AMBER Alerts.

- **AMBER Alert Advisory Committee**

The AMBER Alert Advisory Committee is hereby created as a part of the Statewide AMBER Alert Plan. The Committee provides administrative oversight to develop, implement, review, and recommend revisions to all aspects of the Washington Statewide AMBER Alert Plan. Such recommendations are made to the State AMBER Alert Manager.

The AMBER Alert Advisory Committee shall be chaired by a serving committee member. The AMBER Alert Advisory Committee charter, which shall be approved by the State AMBER Alert Manager, further defines its purpose, authority, and decision-making process. The Committee shall have the same responsibilities with respect to the *Endangered Missing Person Advisory (EMPA) Plan*.

The membership of the Committee shall include representatives from local, state, and tribal law enforcement, broadcasters, a crime victim advocate, the Department of Transportation, the Washington State Emergency Management Division, the State Emergency Communications Committee, and such other participants as the Committee, with the approval of the State AMBER Alert Coordinator, from time to time, shall deem necessary.

At the completion of an active AMBER Alert, the local agency shall submit a narrative summary of the incident and the Alert's role in the recovery to the AMBER Alert Coordinator. This will assist with complying with best practices and provide required reporting to the Department of Justice, completed by the AMBER Alert Coordinator after AMBER Alert activation.

A local law enforcement agency that has initiated an AMBER Alert should conduct a local review of the AMBER Alert with all AMBER Alert stakeholders.

- **State Emergency Communications Committee**

The State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC) has been delegated authority by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to create the State Emergency Alert System (EAS) Plan and manage EAS operations in Washington. Broadcasters must comply with the SECC's State EAS Plan to be in compliance with FCC regulations.

Local AMBER Alert Plans must be approved by the SECC. The SECC shall provide the names of all law enforcement agencies with approved plans to the WSP.



8. AMBER Alert Criteria

All elements 1 through 5 should be satisfied, after considering all the facts and circumstances of the incident, for the incident to qualify as an AMBER Alert.

1. The child is under eighteen (18) years of age, is known to be abducted, and is not a runaway or throw away from home.
2. The abducted child is believed to be in danger of death or serious bodily injury.
3. The AMBER Alert activation should occur within 4 hours of the event qualifying under the criteria as an AMBER Alert, unless circumstances or the timeliness of the information warrant otherwise.
4. There must be enough descriptive information available to believe that an AMBER Alert activation will assist in the recovery of the child. (Must include as much of the following information as possible.)
 - Where the abduction took place;
 - A specific physical description of the child [can include clothing worn when last seen; height; weight; age; hair and eye color; hair length; any additional distinguishing physical characteristics];
 - A physical description of the abductor [can include approximate height; weight; hair color/length; eye/skin color; clothing; any distinguishing physical characteristics];
 - Place last seen;
 - Description of the vehicle [color, make, model, license number, approximate year (older, newer)].
5. The incident must be reported to and investigated by a law enforcement agency.

9. Broadcaster Follow-Up Announcement Schedule

Following the broadcast of the AMBER Alert EAS message through the state relay network, the message will be forwarded through broadcast media outlets.

Broadcasters will receive the latest detailed AMBER Alert information and photos via e-mail, internet, or fax subscription. New information will be sent as available to broadcasters, law enforcement, the public, and many partners who forward AMBER Alerts to a wide collection of audiences.

Once the station has transmitted the initial AMBER Alert:

- During the first three (3) hours after the broadcast of the initial AMBER Alert message, the station is encouraged to broadcast AMBER Alert follow-up announcements every 20 minutes, unless the AMBER Alert is terminated sooner. These messages can be announcements voiced by station personnel and can be incorporated into regular station programming as the station sees fit.

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- The AMBER Alert follow-up announcements must not be a retransmission of the initial AMBER Alert, nor include the EAS header tones, event codes, etc.
- During the second three (3) hours, stations with live personnel are requested to broadcast an AMBER Alert follow-up announcement once every half-hour, unless the AMBER Alert is terminated sooner.
- After six (6) hours, the station is encouraged to broadcast the AMBER Alert follow-up announcements until the AMBER Alert is formally terminated by the activating law enforcement agency, or at the agency's request.

10. Department of Transportation Follow-Up Announcement Schedule

Regional Traffic Management Centers (TMCs) will only respond to a request to activate an AMBER Alert through notification from the WSP, e-mail or fax subscription, or upon notification from another Regional TMC that has received notification from the WSP. Once the *initiating* local area WSP District Communications Center has notified the Regional TMC, that TMC is considered the "Initiating TMC."

The Initiating TMC is responsible for ensuring ALL other Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Regional TMCs have received the AMBER Alert information. Each Regional TMC must be prepared to activate an AMBER Alert upon notification by another TMC, and *without* prior approval of their associated local area WSP District Communications Center.

- There is nothing in the WSDOT AMBER Alert Standard Operating Procedures that suggests a requirement to pre-empt motorist safety messages in order to display an AMBER Alert message.
- It may also be necessary to turn off an AMBER Alert "Variable Message Sign" (VMS) message to display traffic advisory type messages, where motorist safety is concerned, or to shut down an AMBER Alert message on a particular VMS if the display itself creates a traffic hazard.
- Where there is only partial vehicle information available, wording on VMS signs and text of "Highway Advisory Radio" (HAR) messages will be a joint decision between the TMC supervisor and the WSP lieutenant or above, in accordance with approved WSDOT AMBER Alert Standard Operating Procedures. WSDOT will not convey AMBER Alert messages when there is no vehicle information available.
- The length of time alert information will remain on a VMS will be after discussion between the TMC Supervisor and a WSP lieutenant or above.
- Cancellation of AMBER Alert messaging by the Regional TMCs will be directed by the Initiating TMC after WSP verification, e-mail or fax messaging, or other means.
- **Note:** Unless the child has been recovered, cancellation of the AMBER Alert messages on WSDOT HARs and VMSs does not necessarily imply the AMBER Alert is finished; it

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simply indicates that WSDOT active participation using Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) devices has concluded.

11. Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

- NCMEC, in conjunction with FEMA, will activate the WEA system for AMBER Alert activations that occur between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. These alerts are only issued when there is a license plate number available and brief vehicle description.
- WEA messages are issued for initial activation and any updates of vehicle information to the alert. There is no cancellation message.
- As with EAS activations, WEA activations will be statewide in scope.
- The NCMEC call center or the State AMBER Alert Coordinator can be contacted for questions about activations of WEA.

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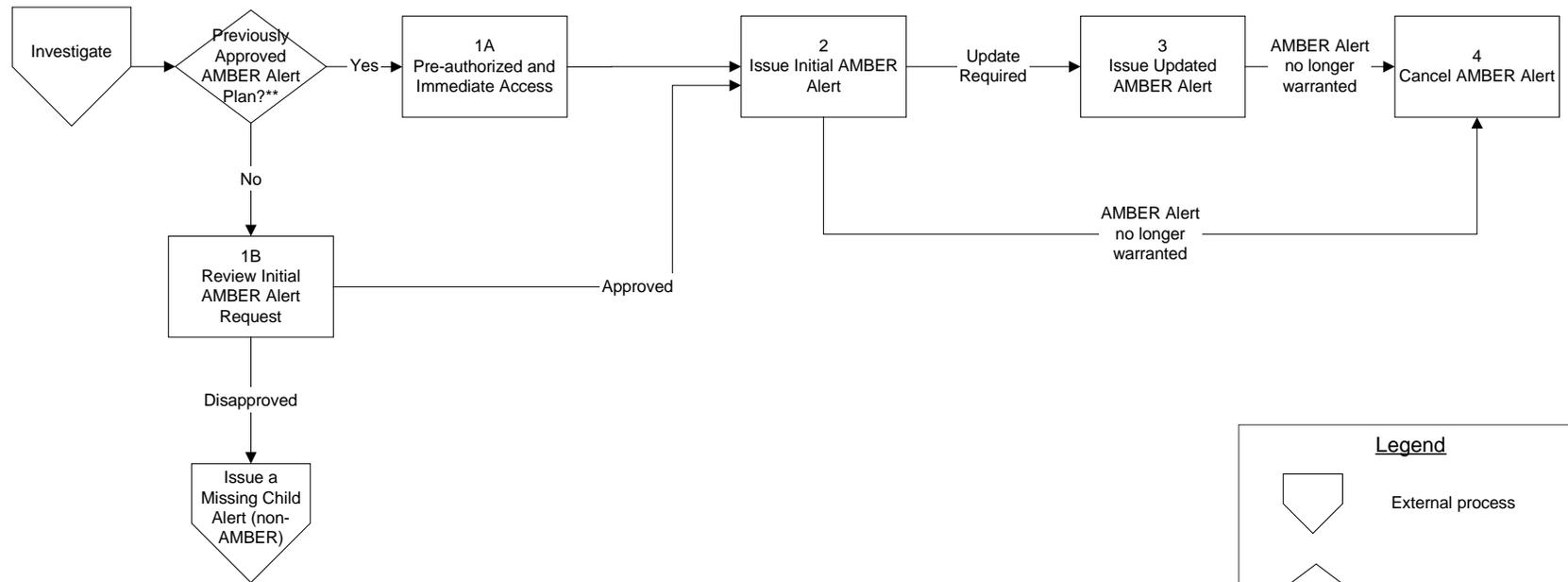
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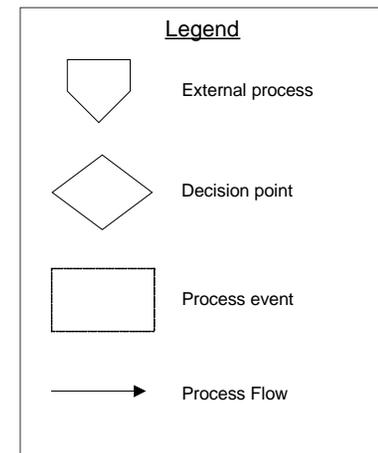
12. Procedures

The following diagram and associated event descriptions (in table format) reflect the high-level AMBER Alert process flow and are further detailed in the AMBER Alert User Procedures.

Process Diagram



**** A Law Enforcement agency with a previously approved AMBER Alert Plan or one with an existing mutual aid agreement with another Law Enforcement agency having an approved plan qualifies.**



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Description of Process Events

Process Event	Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA)	Washington State Patrol (WSP)	WA State Emergency Management Division (EMD)	Broadcasters	Washington State Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT)
Investigate Incident <i>(External Processes)</i>	1. Investigate and compile the initial information.				
1A. Pre-authorized and Immediate Access <i>(For those having a previously approved AMBER Alert Plan or having a developed mutual aid agreement with another LEA with an approved plan.)</i>	1. Determine that the AMBER Alert criteria is met. 2. Notify the WSP that LEA has approved an Alert and request notifications to be sent. 3. Reference you have a previously approved AMBER Plan.	1. Checklist of approved plans and proceed immediately with providing the LEA with assistance in entry into the Portal or coordination with AAC. 2. Begin coordination with EMD, DOT.			

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Description of Process Events

Process Event	Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA)	Washington State Patrol (WSP)	WA State Emergency Management Division (EMD)	Broadcasters	Washington State Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT)
<p>1B. Initial Review of AMBER Alert Request</p> <p><i>(For those without a previously approved AMBER Alert Plan or having a developed mutual aid agreement with another LEA with an approved plan.)</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine that the AMBER Alert criteria is met. 2. Request the WSP to issue an AMBER Alert. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and approve/ disapprove LEA's request based on the approved statewide criteria. 2. Notify LEA of approval. 			
<p><i>If AMBER Alert criteria are not met:</i> Issue an Endangered Missing Person Advisory (non-AMBER).</p> <p><i>(External Process)</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive notification of disapproval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize Statewide Endangered Missing Person Advisory Plan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notify LEA of disapproval. 			



Description of Process Events

<i>Process Event</i>	<i>Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA)</i>	<i>Washington State Patrol (WSP)</i>	<i>WA State Emergency Management Division (EMD)</i>	<i>Broadcasters</i>	<i>Washington State Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT)</i>
2. Issue Initial AMBER Alert	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authorize WSP to enter in the Portal. 2. Responsible for the ongoing investigation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter alert into the notification system. 2. Notify a single point of contact in EMD to issue the AMBER Alert via EAS. 3. Notify a single point of contact in WSDOT to activate the VMS and the HAR. 4. Post information on social media sites and pages. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive notification from the WSP to issue the AMBER Alert by phone or through e-mail or fax. 2. Issue the AMBER Alert via EAS. 3. Activate National Warning System (911 centers). 4. Send AMBER Alert ACCESS administrative text message. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive the AMBER Alert via EAS. 2. Receive the AMBER Alert via e-mail or fax. 3. Broadcast the AMBER Alert. 4. Make follow-up AMBER Alert announcements. (Ref: #6 above) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive the request from the WSP to activate the VMS and the HAR. 2. Receive the AMBER Alert information via e-mail or fax. 3. Activate the VMS and the HAR, as determined appropriate pursuant to DOT procedures.



Description of Process Events

<i>Process Event</i>	<i>Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA)</i>	<i>Washington State Patrol (WSP)</i>	<i>WA State Emergency Management Division (EMD)</i>	<i>Broadcasters</i>	<i>Washington State Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT)</i>
3. Issue Updated AMBER Alert	Request WSP make updates to the Portal.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter updated information into the Portal. 2. If conditions warrant, request EMD to issue update via EAS and DOT to update the VMS and the HAR. 3. Consult with LEA and DOT prior to end of 12 hr Rule. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive update notice from the WSP or via e-mail or fax notification. 2. Issue update via EAS. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive updated information via e-mail or fax subscription. 2. Broadcast updated AMBER Alert information. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive updated information via e-mail or fax subscription. 2. Update the VMS and the HAR (after conferring with the WSP, if necessary). 3. Consult with the WSP lieutenant or above for message duration.



Description of Process Events

<i>Process Event</i>	<i>Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA)</i>	<i>Washington State Patrol (WSP)</i>	<i>WA State Emergency Management Division (EMD)</i>	<i>Broadcasters</i>	<i>Washington State Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT)</i>
4. Cancel AMBER Alert	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine that the AMBER Alert activation is no longer warranted. 2. Request WSP send the cancellation through Alert Sense. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cancel alert in the Portal. 2. Notify a single point of contact in EMD of cancellation. 3. Notify a single point of contact in DOT of cancellation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive cancellation notice from the WSP or through fax or e-mail subscription. 2. Issue cancellation using EAS code "ADR." 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive cancellation via EAS (using "ADR" code). 2. Receive cancellation via e-mail or fax subscription. 3. Broadcast cancellation as a news item or other means--but do not rebroadcast EAS cancellation message. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive cancellation via e-mail or fax subscription. 2. Receive cancellation notice from the WSP. 3. Cancel the VMS and the HAR.

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13. Sample AMBER Alert EAS Message Script (for use by EMD)

This is an activation of the AMBER Alert System.

We have just received this important information regarding an abducted child in

_____ . The _____ is
Area, District, City, and/or County *Law Enforcement Jurisdiction(s)*

looking for a child who was last seen at _____
Location

and is believed to be in danger. The child's name is _____. He/She is
Name

_____ years old, _____ with _____ hair and was last seen wearing
Age *Gender* *Color*

_____. Authorities say that the child may be in the
Description of Clothing

company of _____ and they may be traveling in a
Name, Description, Clothing, etc.

_____ that was last seen heading
Vehicle Make, Model, Color, License Plate #

_____. If you have any information on the whereabouts of
Direction and Street/City Location

this child, _____, please contact _____
Name or Description of Child *Contact Telephone Number*

immediately.

Sample AMBER Broadcaster Follow-Up Announcement Text

"This is an AMBER Alert. An AMBER Alert has been issued for Washington State. _____ (listeners/viewers) are advised to look for (vehicle description), driven by (suspect description). The victim is (victim details) has been abducted by a non-family member and is at risk of physical harm. If you see a (vehicle description), please dial 911 immediately, and tell the operator you have information about the AMBER Alert, again, if you see (vehicle description), please dial 911."