



WASHINGTON STATE Blue Alert System Plan January 2013



I. PURPOSE

The Washington State Blue Alert Plan is authorized by RCW 10.108 to create a voluntary, cooperative system to quickly disseminate crucial information to enhance the public's ability to assist law enforcement in the apprehension of person(s) suspected of killing or seriously injuring law enforcement officers through broadcasters; cable systems; Department of Transportation; local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies; and other interested participants. This procedure does not create any requirement to send a Blue Alert. The decision to activate a Blue Alert rests solely with the investigating agency or its designee, following the criteria listed in Section II below.

"Law enforcement officers" include police officers, the Attorney General and the Attorney General's deputies, sheriffs and the sheriff's regular deputies, corrections officers, tribal law enforcement officers, park rangers, state and local fire marshals, county and district firefighters, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife agents, and federal law enforcement officers.

The Washington State Patrol (WSP), in partnership with the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC), shall implement a statewide Blue Alert Plan. The plan shall be consistent with the AMBER Alert Plan and the Endangered Missing Person Advisory Plan (EMPA). This plan will be available to all law enforcement agencies in Washington and is independent from the AMBER and EMPA systems.

II. BLUE ALERT CRITERIA

A Blue Alert may be activated when the investigating agency (the agency that has primary jurisdiction or has been delegated and accepted investigating responsibility over the area in which a law enforcement officer has been seriously injured or killed) believes that all of the following criteria are met:

- A suspect has not been apprehended;
- The suspect may be a serious threat to the public;
- *Enough suspect and vehicle information* (as described below) is available to disseminate to assist in apprehending the suspect (include as much as possible);
- Release of the information will not compromise the investigation;
- Releasing the victim information will not improperly notify an officer's next of kin.

Suspect(s) information: photo (if available); name; age; race; gender; height; weight; hair and eye color; any distinguishing physical characteristics such as hair length, facial hair, scars, marks, tattoos, glasses, etc; clothing description when last seen.



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Vehicle information: color, year, make, model, accessories (rims, spoiler, tinted windows, stickers, etc.), license plate, state; and location last seen.

III. PROCEDURE FOR AGENCIES TO INITIATE A BLUE ALERT

When a Blue Alert is activated, the investigating agency or designee must provide descriptive information under the Washington Criminal Justice Information Act and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system.

The investigating agency's responsibilities include the following. If the investigating agency believes all criteria are met (section II), initiate the following actions, as appropriate:

- Prepare a Blue Alert Plan administrative message through ACCESS (A Central Computerized Enforcement Service System). Write "Blue Alert Advisory" in the title of the message.
- Call the local WSP Communications to verify the advisory administrative message was received.
- Receive and disseminate any information regarding the suspect, the suspect's whereabouts, and the suspect's method of escape.
- Issue press releases to initiate, update, and cancel the Blue Alert as the case warrants. Upon request of the investigating agency, WSP Government and Media Relations office may initiate the press release (send notifications to media groups to initiate, update, and cancel the Blue Alert) on its behalf.
- Appoint a Public Information Officer (PIO) to handle press inquiries. The PIO should be continually updated and encouraged to utilize the media as much as possible to receive the maximum media exposure for the case.
- If vehicle information is available, may call WSP Communications to request WSDOT to activate Variable Message Signs (VMS).
- Be prepared to handle a high volume of phone calls and consider allocating additional resources for this purpose.

Notes:

1. In the event a Fish and Wildlife Officer is seriously injured or killed, the Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Chief or designee shall alert the Washington State Patrol, which will then disseminate the necessary information to the appropriate agencies through current electronic mechanisms.



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2. The Blue Alert System does not preclude any in-house procedures, policies, or practices used by a law enforcement agency.
3. A Blue Alert may be issued on a local, regional or statewide basis; however, WSDOT VMS activation will be statewide only.
4. No cause of action may be maintained for civil damages against any radio or television broadcasting station or cable television system, or the employees of those organizations, resulting from information distributed pursuant to the provisions under RCW 10.108, Section 4.

IV. AFTER THE BLUE ALERT IS ACTIVATED

- All Washington law enforcement agencies are notified through the ACCESS Administrative message.
- A press release will notify all alerting partners and the public via the media of the initial alert and any subsequent updates.
 - In the event the investigating agency needs additional resources to send out a wide range press release:
 - The Washington State Association of Broadcasters has an e-mail list available on their web site for reference.
 - The WSP Government and Media Relations Office has an e-mail list available for the investigating agency's use upon request.
- The State Patrol will notify the WSDOT Traffic Management Centers (TMCs) for activation of the Variable Messages Signs (VMS). Content of the signs will be determined by the TMC Supervisor and the WSP, in accordance with approved WSDOT Blue Alert Standard Operating Procedures.
 - The length of time alert information will remain on a VMS will be determined after discussion between the TMC Supervisor and the WSP .
- The State Patrol will notify all Washington State Ports of Entry of the Blue Alert.

V. CANCELING THE BLUE ALERT

- The investigating agency shall terminate the Blue Alert with respect to a particular suspect when the suspect is located or the incident is otherwise resolved, by sending another administrative message through ACCESS.
- The investigating agency must send a cancellation advisory press release.



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- The press release will automatically notify all alerting partners and the public, via the media, of the cancellation.
- In the event the investigating agency needs additional resources to send out a wide-range press release:
 - The Washington State Association of Broadcasters has an e-mail list available on its web site for reference.
 - The WSP Government and Media Relations Office has an e-mail list available for the investigating agency's use upon request.
- The WSP will notify the WSDOT TMC for cancellation of the VMS.
 - Cancellation of Blue Alert messaging by the Regional TMCs will be directed by the "initiating TMC" after discussion between the TMC Supervisor and the WSP has determined certain regions are no longer necessary.

VI. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- WSP Communications Division is available to provide training and/or training materials.
 - Contact the WSP Communication Division Blue Alert Coordinator.
- The WSP Government and Media Relations Office can assist with press releases, training, and broadcaster/media contact information.
 - Contact the WSP Headquarters Public Information Officer.
- The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs can provide liaison and coordination with law enforcement agencies including state, county, municipal, tribal, college and federal assets and provide training opportunities as requested at association meetings and conferences.
 - Contact the WASPC Executive Director.