THE AMBER ADVOCATE

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

AMBER Alert INFO:
For AMBER Alert Training
& Technical Assistance,
contact:

Phil Keith, Program Director
AMBER Alert Training &
Technical Assistance Program

877-71-AMBER
askamber@fvtc.edu

Training & Class registration:
www.amber-net.org

EDITOR:
Paul Murphy
murphyp@fvtc.edu

GRAPHIC LAYOUT:
Scott Troxel
scotrox@gmail.com

AMBER ALERTS IN THE WIRELESS AGE

EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM EXPANDS ABILITY TO FIND ABDUCTED CHILDREN

Vicky Orozco put her 8-month-old son Carlos in his car seat so he could nap while she took a shower. When she returned a short time later, her son was gone.

Shortly after noon on February 20, 2013, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension issued its first AMBER Alert that included the new Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) to help notify the public. WEA sent the alert to nearly every cell phone in Minnesota.

The alert included information about a female acquaintance who police suspected had abducted the child and the car she was reportedly driving. Like thousands of other people, teenager Daisy Buenrostro was surprised to see the alert on her phone. Buenrostro also spotted the suspect's car across the street and checked the license plate to make sure it was the right one.

"I was so shocked," she told a reporter. "I was like, 'This is the car.' So, I ran back inside the house and told my dad."

The teen and her father called 911, and within minutes after the alert was issued, the suspect was in custody and the baby was home safe with his mother. It also is the first AMBER Alert success story directly linked to WEA.

The Minnesota Wireless AMBER Alert Notification

"The AMBER Alert was a success. It was an excellent use of the new cell phone technology," noted Minnesota AMBER Alert Coordinator Janell Rasmussen. "I cannot tell you how many people were talking about the alert. The media was going crazy and everyone was talking about it on the social media. They were giddy to get this information. We had no complaints about this."

Vicky Orozco

THE WIRELESS REACH

More people than ever can now receive an AMBER Alert. Beginning January 1, 2013, the alerts reach 97% of all people in the area where the child has been abducted through the WEA which is also called the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) operates WEA and distributes alerts from authorized government agencies about emergency situations to customers with capable mobile devices.

The messages supplement the existing Emergency Alert System which broadcasts alerts over radio and television. FEMA worked with the Federal Communications Commission, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) to expand the alert system to include AMBER Alerts. WEA is also used for National Weather Service, Presidential, and Imminent Threat Alerts.

WIRELESS BEGINNINGS

Some state AMBER Alert programs included the ability to send alerts to cell phones as far back as 2002. In May 2005, a voluntary partnership between the wireless industry, DOJ, and NCMEC started the national Wireless AMBER Alert Initiative to provide alerts to cell phones in all 50 states.

The program distributed Wireless AMBER Alerts to more than 700,000 cellular subscribers who signed up to receive the messages. The initiative also brought

Continued on page 4

AMBER ALERTS IN THE WIRELESS AGE

Continued from page 3

Steve Largent, CTIA President & CEO

awareness to the AMBER Alert Program through public service announcements and press events.

However, people had to register their phones to get the alerts, and one could choose to be notified in only five zip code areas. For example, if you lived in Utah and were vacationing in Florida, you would receive an AMBER Alert for Utah, but you would not get an alert issued in Florida.

"It made sense to send a succinct text message to alert users so they would be on the lookout for the kidnapped child and abductor in their area," said Steve Largent, president and CEO of CTIA-The Wireless Association and president of The Wireless Foundation. "The WEA AMBER Alerts will be an even better tool to help find abducted children."

BIGGER BUT FOCUSED

The new alert system was developed with lessons learned from the AMBER Alert Program. WEA uses a channel called Cell Broadcast and is not affected by congestion on voice or SMS text channels. The alerts are targeted to cell towers instead of relying on zip codes. If you have a mobile device in the area where the alert is issued, you will automatically receive the alert. Unlike a text message, the alert will pop up on the screen of the wireless device.

"Wireless AMBER Alerts were an important evolution of that program, and we are grateful to those who made it possible," said John Ryan, NCMEC CEO. "They understand that the eyes and ears of many are better than the eyes and ears of few when a child's life is at stake."

John Ryan, NCMEC CEO

The new system means the people who can actually do something about an abducted child will get the alerts. However, 3% of phones are not equipped to receive the alerts. The goal of the wireless industry is to have all phones compatible with the system by the end of 2013.

LOUDER BUT SHORTER

The new AMBER Alerts include a loud, audible tone. The first AMBER Alert in Florida using the new system went out at 1:45 a.m. on January 14. A 2-year-old girl was missing and her bedroom window was open. The alert went out statewide, and some people were upset that a generic message that said a child had been abducted had awakened them.

Florida AMBER Alert Coordinator Jessica Davenport and most people did not know the alert would include an audible tone that went out to everyone in the state. Davenport worked with NCMEC to change how the alert is used. The state's temporary policy now states that alerts will only go out to specific regions, and WEA will not be used for alerts between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

"We have a large population of older folks," said Davenport. "As long as we use it conscientiously, we should be able to reach a lot of people."

Davenport also decided not to use WEA unless they have vehicle information. In this case, the missing girl was found safe 15 hours later in a field a half-mile from her home.

Developers of the WEA system included a tone with the alerts so people would know they may be in danger when receiving a National Weather Service, Presidential, or Imminent Threat alert. Because of the loud sound, NCMEC is also recommending that WEA should not be used between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

"If we have people opt-out, then we may never get them back," said Bob Hoever, Director of Special Programs in the Missing Children Division at NCMEC.

NCMEC is also asking AMBER Alert coordinators to notify NCMEC about how they want to use WEA. Coordinators need to decide if there are times that WEA would not be used and if the alert is going statewide or to specific regions. NCMEC should be informed about these details.

Bob Hoever, NCMEC

"You should not be deciding about your maps in the middle of an AMBER Alert," warned Hoever. "Proper planning is the key."

The new alerts are limited to only 90 characters-including spaces. The alerts cannot contain photos, Web links, or phone numbers. To make WEA a more effective tool, NCMEC suggests that it should not be used if authorities do not have vehicle information or very specific information about the child.

"If you are going to put out generic information, you better put your call center on nuclear power because you are going to get swamped with generic leads," said Hoever. "The information in the alert has to be meaningful."

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Unless they have received an alert, most people still do not know about WEA. NCMEC is encouraging AMBER Alert coordinators to talk to the media and let the public know what has changed with AMBER Alerts.

"I think there is a critical need for all of us to educate the public on what these alerts can do and where they can receive information," said Hoever.

Florida is already developing a public relations campaign. "I think the ability to reach a wider number of people will be very useful," said Davenport. "We want to make sure everyone knows what the new alert is and how to use it."

Minnesota's first AMBER Alert involving WEA sparked immediate interest from the media. Rasmussen's only regret is that she did not educate the public before the first alert using WEA went out.

"The alert was shocking to some people. Some people were driving, and they had never heard that type of tone in their car," said Rasmussen. "I think everyone should put together an education plan because the media will be very excited about it."

Learn more about the Wireless Emergency Alert system online:

NCMEC is offering webinars to teach AMBER Alert coordinators about WEA. Coordinators can also direct the public to these websites with detailed information on how the new alerts work and how to respond.

NCMEC: www.missingkids.com/AMBER/WEA

DOJ: www.amberalert.gov

FEMA: www.fema.gov/commercial-mobile-alert-system

Wireless Industry: www.ctia.org/org/consumer_info/safety/index.cfm/AID/12082

ON THE FRONT LINES

KANSAS AMBER ALERT FINDS TEEN REPORTEDLY TAKEN AT GUNPOINT

The Leavenworth (Kansas) Police Department did not have much time for second guessing after receiving reports that an ex-boyfriend, who witnesses said had made threatening statements earlier in the day, grabbed a 16-year-old girl and forced her into a car.

According to witnesses, the 17-year-old suspect took off with the girl after fighting with her current boyfriend. They also said the suspect had been spotted with a handgun and threatening people earlier in the day.

On July 5, the police department filled out the AMBER Alert request form on the Kansas Criminal Justice Information System Portal and contacted the Kansas Bureau of Investigation for approval.

"Once we determine the AMBER Alert criteria have been met, the law enforcement coordinator starts the process to issue the alert," said Kansas AMBER Alert Coordinator Derek Welsh. The alert was issued at 2:55 p.m.

The Kansas Bureau of Investigation contacted the state's Emergency Alert System provider, a Topeka radio station, so the alert could be recorded and forwarded to all broadcasters. TV and radio stations aired the alert every 15 minutes the first hour, every 30 minutes the second hour, and once every hour until the next scheduled newscast.

The AMBER Alert was posted on highway signs, business signs, and digital billboards. The alert was sent out via e-mail, text message, and posted on the Kansas AMBER Alert website (www.ksamber.org), which is updated every 15 minutes, and showed up as a banner on other state government websites. "As soon as we were called, our wheels were put into motion, and things happened smoothly," said Welsh.

Around 8:00 p.m., a citizen in Brown County, Kansas, spotted the 1996 Toyota Camry matching the description of the car shown on the AMBER Alert. Brown County authorities pulled the car over and discovered the victim was not very happy she had been found. "She was mad an AMBER Alert was issued and said, 'I am not missing,'" said Welsh.

AMBER Alert coordinators from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation met with Leavenworth police detectives for an after-action review of the alert. Everyone involved agreed that the decision to issue the alert was correct. "Based on the information we had at the time, we made the right decision," said Welsh. "She was located because the AMBER Alert was sent out to the public."

Derek Welsh, Kansas AMBER Alert Coordinator

Welsh said the alert also provided an opportunity to see how the overall AMBER Alert program was working—especially since the state had not issued an alert in nearly 2 years. He learned the tip line worked well even though the usual phone bank area was under construction. However, he is now looking at ways to speed up the alerts going out through secondary distribution.

"The AMBER Alert worked, but there is always room for improvement," said Welsh. "We always find things we can do better."

PROFILE: JESSICA DAVENPORT

FLORIDA COORDINATOR MAKES AMBER ALERTS FASTER AND BETTER

Jessica Davenport always wanted a job where she could make a real difference. Her goal was realized when she was asked to be the Florida AMBER Alert coordinator 2 years ago.

She already had worked for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for 3 years, and she jumped at the chance to develop policies for the AMBER Alert program.

"I was really interested in missing child issues and what happens to a child after he or she is abducted," said Davenport. "We need to identify those needs and have policies in place to help protect children."

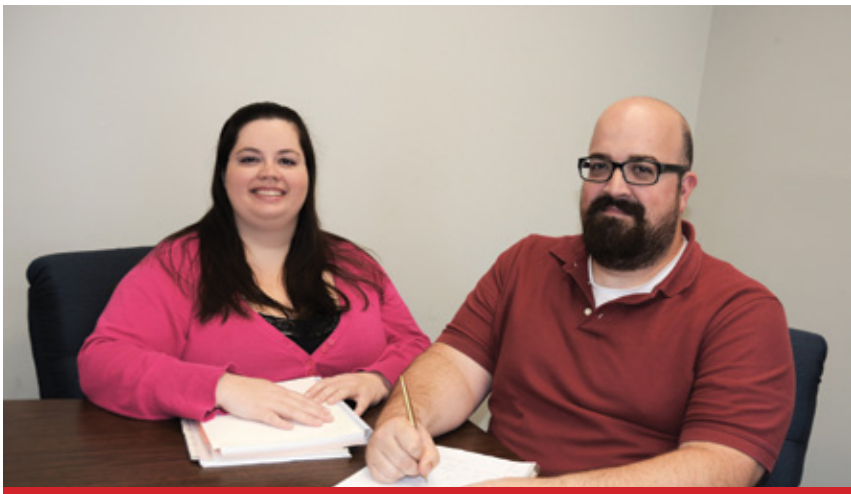
During the past 2 years, she has worked on ways to streamline the process to issue an AMBER Alert. Florida sends the alerts to law enforcement, media, Emergency Alert System, highway signs, 511 Traffic Information Line, Highway Advisory Radio, social media, lottery machines, and through e-mails to people who register to receive them.

"We are always looking for new ways to put out AMBER Alerts," said Davenport. "We also found a way to send alerts when we are at home so we can get the AMBER Alert out faster."

Florida issued seven AMBER Alerts during her first year on the job in 2011. The state issued nine alerts last year, and so far, the state has issued only one in 2013. (See Wireless Alert story on page 3)

Davenport said one memorable alert involved a suspect who met a woman on Facebook and then abducted her baby. "We didn't know the suspect's name, so we contacted Facebook and got enough information to identify the woman and find the child," said Davenport. "Our program is very successful. We have recovered a lot of children from AMBER Alerts."

She offers this advice to new AMBER Alert coordinators: "I think it is important to understand how your AMBER Alert process works, but do not be afraid to make changes and try new ways to make the process more effective."



Jessica Davenport has been the Florida AMBER Alert Coordinator for the past 2 years. She is seated next to Peter Warren who became the state's AMBER Alert Coordinator in March 2013. Warren is also looking to use new technology to streamline the AMBER Alert process.

Davenport is the oldest of six children in her family and said this has helped her have empathy for parents of abducted children. "I know the feeling of how terrifying it would be to lose a child," she said. "I keep this in mind all the time."

When she is not working, Davenport is actively involved in politics and community issues. However, she says the AMBER Alert program has given her a chance to see real results from her efforts. "It is nice to have an impact," she said. "I think a lot of us who work for criminal justice are looking to make a difference. The AMBER Alert is one way you can really see you are making an impact."

"I think it is important to understand how your AMBER Alert process works, but do not be afraid to make changes and try new ways to make the process more effective."

AMBER ALERT SYMPOSIUM

HEADLINE-MAKING CASES TO BE FEATURED AT NATIONAL AMBER ALERT SYMPOSIUM

The 2013 National AMBER Alert Symposium, entitled "Missing, Abducted and Endangered Children: Protection, Response and Recovery" will be held May 8-10, 2013, in Jacksonville, Florida. The symposium will feature an examination of two child endangerment cases that captured nationwide media attention and the lessons learned from these cases.

The Jaycee Dugard case:

11-year-old Jaycee Dugard was abducted in 1991 and was missing for 18 years until her abductor, a convicted sex offender, was arrested in 2009 and she was found living at his home in northern California.

The Connecticut Shooting:

On December 14, 2012, 20-year-old Adam Lanza shot and killed 20 children and 6 adults at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut. Lanza killed his mother before going to the school and then killed himself when first responders arrived.

Speakers and workshops will discuss best practices for helping human trafficking victims; missing, endangered, and abducted case studies; compliant behavior; facial recognition; sex offender management; and the use of social media.

The Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, is hosting the symposium to help AMBER Alert coordinators, CART coordinators, Missing Children Clearinghouse managers, and other AMBER Alert partners strengthen efforts to find abducted, missing, and endangered children.

For more information on how to register, contact askamber@fvtc.edu.

AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

MEXICO LAUNCHES AMBER ALERT PROGRAMS IN ALL STATES

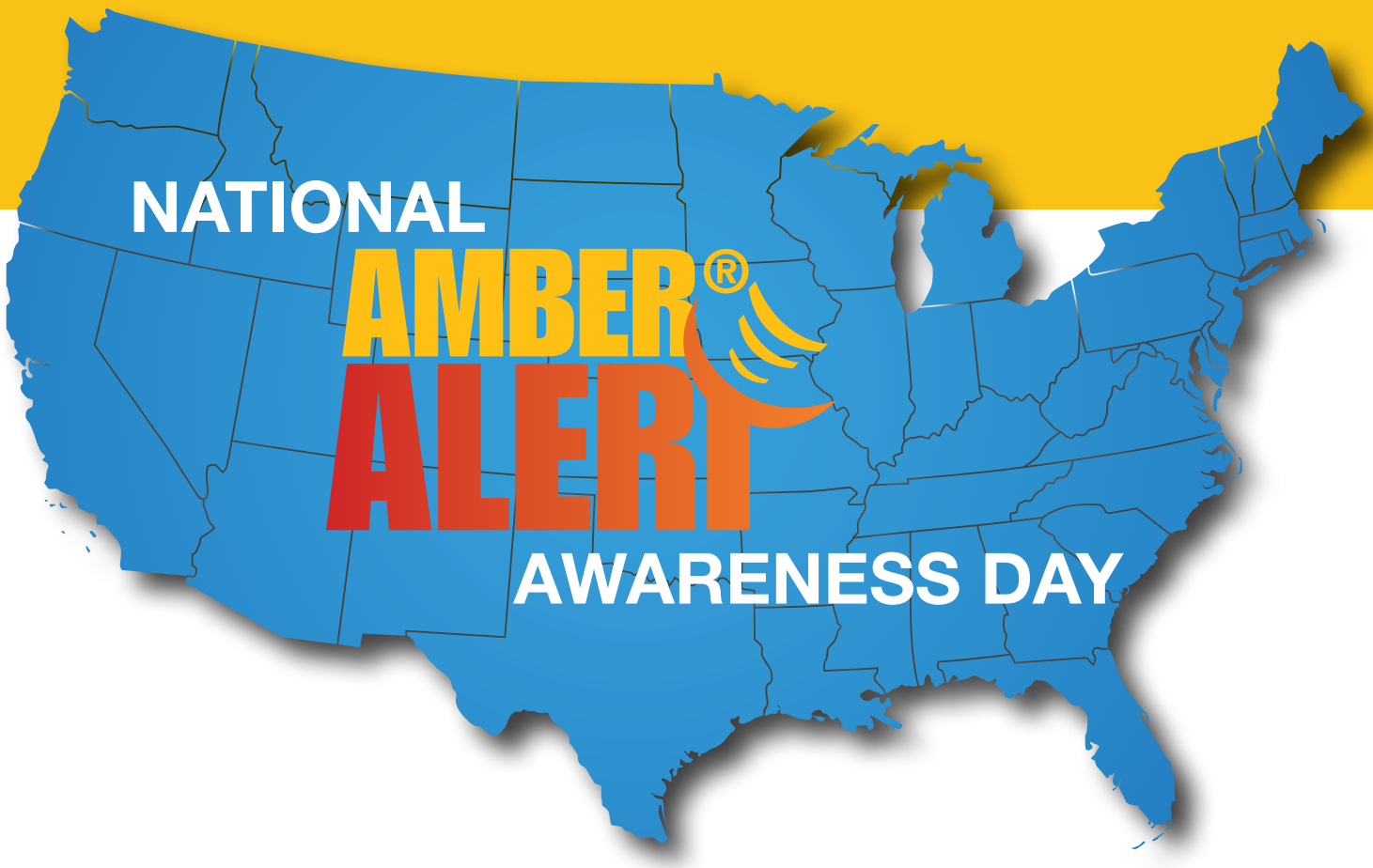
Mexico became the first Latin American country to implement an AMBER Alert Program and the tenth in the world. The program called "Alerta AMBER Mexico" was developed through a joint training program by the U.S. AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program, U.S. Embassy Mexico City and Office of Prosecutorial Development and Training (OPDAT). *Read more http://bit.ly/14c5VpN*

THAILAND IS TRYING TO STOP TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Representatives from child advocacy groups met in Thailand in February to discuss ways to improve the rights of children and stop child prostitution and abuse. The advocates are developing a "children's rights contract" for countries that promote four principals:

- Forbidding discrimination against children in protecting their rights.
- Putting children as the first priority before the law.
- Fostering the development of health, mind, and emotions in children.
- Ensuring children have the right to express their opinions in making a decision.

Read more http://bit.ly/Zdmtpc



AMBER ALERT PARTNERS TAKE A DAY TO RAISE AWARENESS

On January 13, which is National AMBER Alert Awareness Day, the nation paused and remembered the kidnapping and murder of Amber Hagerman. The 9-year-old girl was killed on January 13, 1996, and her death sparked the development of the AMBER Alert Program.

This year AMBER Alert partners found different ways to remind the public who was lost and what is being done now to recover abducted children. Here are some examples of how different states commemorated the day:

- In Brazos Valley, Texas, fifth graders took part in the National Missing Children's Day Poster Contest.
- The Texas Department of Public Safety encouraged people to sign up to receive alerts and noted that 75 AMBER Alerts have been issued since the statewide plan started in 2002.
- In Oregon, the public was encouraged to sign up to receive AMBER Alerts through authorized sources, including the Oregon AMBER Alert page on Facebook.
- The California Highway Patrol shared that the state has had more than 200 AMBER Alerts since its program started in 2002, which resulted in the safe recovery of more than 240 children.
- The Missouri State Highway Patrol promoted the National Missing Children's Day Poster Contest and how the new Emergency Alert System is being used to send AMBER Alerts to cell phones.
- Utah held its 20th test of the state AMBER Alert program and encouraged the public to sign up for a new portal being used to send alerts.
- The Florida Department of Law Enforcement reported the state had issued 31 Missing Child Alerts and 9 AMBER Alerts last year and that 2 children were recovered directly because of the AMBER Alerts.

SUCCESS STORIES

AMBER ALERT IS SAVING LIVES AROUND THE WORLD

NOVEMBER 9, 2012

White Swan, WA

A 2-year-old girl was taken by her non-custodial father from the child's home. An AMBER Alert was issued because the father was believed to be intoxicated. The abductor became aware of the AMBER Alert online and contacted police to turn himself in and return the child safely. *Read more: http://bit.ly/AA211*

NOVEMBER 14, 2012

Gallatin, TN

A 2-month-old boy was abducted by a man who was in the process of establishing paternity. The abductor saw the AMBER Alert on television and contacted law enforcement so he could return the child safely. *Read more: http://bit.ly/147KkhV*

NOVEMBER 15, 2012

British Columbia, Canada

An AMBER Alert was issued in British Columbia, Canada, for a 3-year-old boy abducted by his non-custodial father. Law enforcement believed the abductor would travel to the United States and extended the AMBER Alert to Washington and Montana. The abductor met a man at a Montana bowling alley and asked for money and to use a cell phone. The abductor slept in his car outside of the man's home. The citizen subsequently saw the AMBER Alert and notified law enforcement. The child was rescued safely and the abductor was taken into custody. *Read more: http://bit.ly/AA216*

NOVEMBER 16, 2012

Halifax, VA

An AMBER Alert was issued for a child who was taken by his non-custodial parents. The child was believed to be in danger due to abuse and neglect. The AMBER Alert prompted a tip from a truck driver who saw the child's father driving without the child. A second tip came from an anonymous person who saw the alert on television and helped law enforcement find the child and arrest the parents. *Read more: http://on.wusa9.com/160r58h*

LETTERS TO THE ADVOCATE

"The AMBER Advocate has exceptionally well-done articles that professionally integrate with applicable training opportunities. I have forwarded it to numerous law enforcement agencies we deal with here in the Chicagoland area. Your staff does an exceptional job on this."

Brian Killacky, trainer and retired Chicago police detective

"Thank you very much for allowing me to attend the SITCAC Training in Raleigh, North Carolina. All instructors did a wonderful job of presenting the material and in a very informative manner."

Arleigh R. Porter, Chief of Police, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

ODDS & ENDS

CALIFORNIA WOMAN ARRESTED FOR LYING TO TRIGGER AN AMBER ALERT

Oakland, California, police arrested a woman for filing a false report after they issued an AMBER Alert for her nonexistent 18-month-old daughter. On February 1, 2013, the woman claimed her husband assaulted her and then abducted their daughter. The woman said the child was wearing a pink shirt with blue bears and had a Tigger blanket. After police learned the story was a hoax, they called off the AMBER Alert and the 4-hour manhunt. *Read more: http://bit.ly/AA219*

AMBER ALERT TRAINING AVAILABLE IN 2013

The AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program has announced the schedule for training in 2013. The Department of Justice Initiative courses will be offered this year in Baltimore, Maryland; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Indianapolis, Indiana.

The courses being offered this year include the following:

- Basic Forensic Response to Missing and Abducted Children.
- Canvassing, Search, and Recovery Strategies for Abducted Children.
- Child Abduction Response Team (CART).
- Investigative Strategies for Missing and Abducted Children (ISMAC).
- Leadership for Missing and Abducted Children (LMAC).
- Specialized Investigative Techniques in Child Abduction Cases (SITCAC).

The CART Certification is offered on a technical assistance basis. Find the full training calendar, course information and how to register at: http://www.amber-net.org/training.htm.

Home | Training Schedule | Distance Learning | Technical Assistance Request | CART Certification Request | Program Overview

2013 AMBER Alert Training Calendar

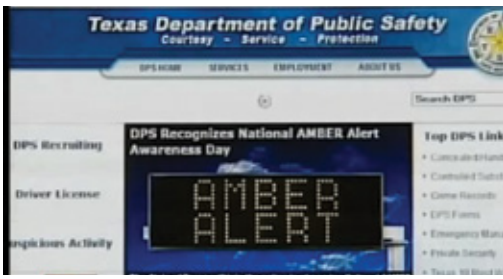
Please register online for training by choosing the date/class number below
**If you go directly to MyTraining, you will need to remember the specific cl

Location	ISMAC	CART	SITCA
Baltimore, MD			
Minneapolis, MN	7/22–25/13 70052	7/22–25/13 70051	7/22–25, 70053
Tulsa, OK	8/19–22/13 80075	8/19–22/13 80073	8/19–22, 80077
Baltimore, MD	9/16–19/13 80076	9/16–19/13 80074	9/16–19, 80078
Indianapolis, IN			

NEW MEXICO EXPANDS CRITERIA FOR AMBER ALERT

New Mexico lawmakers have approved a bill that will allow AMBER Alerts to be issued for children abducted by a parent or family members. The state's current law only allows AMBER Alerts for children taken by strangers. On January 28, 2013, the House passed the bill 61 to 2, and it has gone to the Senate for consideration. *Read more: http://bit.ly/WDOrh4*

TEXAS DPS TAKES OVER AMBER ALERT DISTRIBUTION



The Texas Department of Public Safety will now distribute flyers for AMBER Alerts. A non-profit corporation previously handled the flyers and other AMBER Alert functions. Local law enforcement officers can now register at dps.texas.gov to create their own flyers. *Read more: http://bit.ly/13bLwkR*

ODDS & ENDS

PITTSBURGH POLICE DISCOVER AMBER ALERT WAS BASED ON A HOAX

Pittsburgh Police issued an AMBER Alert on February 12, 2013, after a 13-year-old girl reported seeing another girl step off a school bus and then get dragged away by a man who had wrapped his arm around her mouth. The witness said the victim was a 14-year-old girl, and she was taken by a heavy-set middle-aged man. Investigators determined the story was false and will meet with prosecutors to determine whether they will file charges. *Read more: http://bit.ly/160s0Wm*

ALERT SYSTEM HACKED TO ISSUE ZOMBIE WARNING

Ten TV stations aired false alerts about a zombie invasion in February. Hackers entered the Emergency Alert System through the "back door" of the security system and sent the message to viewers in Montana, Michigan, California, Utah, and New Mexico. Each incident included a TV crawl and a mechanically altered voice warning of "zombies attacking the living." The FBI and FTC are investigating the breach. *Read more: http://huff.to/WDQXnl*

FLORIDA GETS PERSONALIZED AMBER ALERT TRAINING

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Florida Sheriff's Association held a "build-a-course" event in February with trainers from the AMBER Alert Training and Assistance Program. Organizers selected specific courses needed in their area. They hope to hold classes in Kissimmee, Orlando, Tallahassee, and Fort Meyers to reach officers throughout the state.

AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY: TRIBAL COMMUNITY TRAINS ON PROTECTING CHILDREN

The White River Apache Tribe hosted a community education session that focused on recognizing children at risk and helping in the safe recovery of missing or abducted children. AMBER Alert In Indian Country Team Members offered courses in White River, Arizona, in November 2012. The program included investigative and response training for law enforcement and a special session for the public.