THE AMBER ADVOCATE

ISSUE | 2019

LEARNING FROM AN AMBER ALERT

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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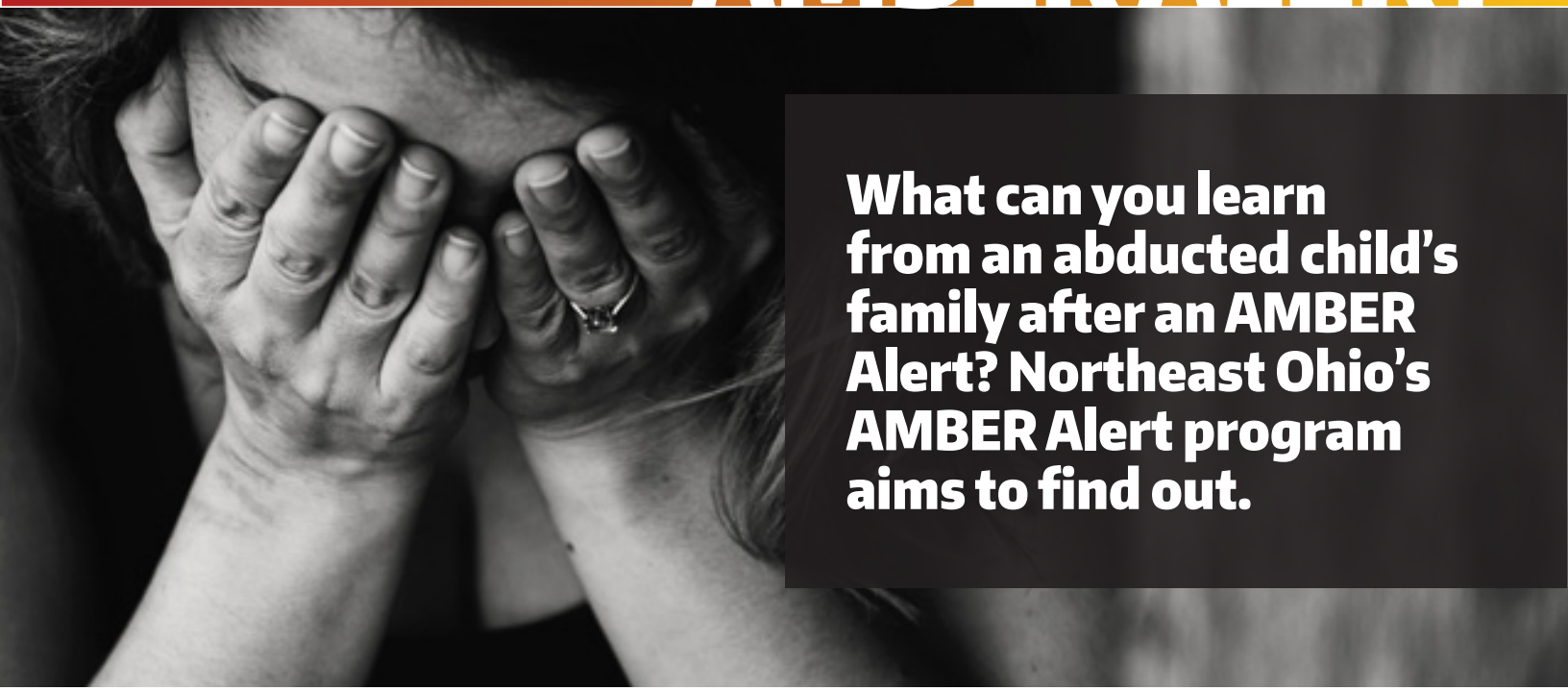
LEARNING FROM AN AMBER ALERT



What can you learn from an abducted child's family after an AMBER Alert? Northeast Ohio's AMBER Alert program aims to find out.

The safe recovery of an abducted child after an AMBER Alert doesn't mean the end of work that needs to be done to support the family and build greater capacity for effective response with future incidents. Recognizing this, the Northeast Ohio AMBER Alert Committee (NOAAC) developed an AMBER Alert Family Response Plan to seek advice and information from the victim's family after the work of law enforcement investigators and the power of strategic public alerting has brought a child safely home.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) believes the plan is the first formalized program at the local level to determine how the family perceived the work of law enforcement and how they feel they were treated during the investigation and AMBER Alert issuance. The family can also learn more through this program about additional resources from law enforcement and the greater community that are needed when these incidents occur.

The recognition of the need by the NOAAC arose in the spring of 2018, during the early moments of an AMBER Alert in Ohio when officers had to break up a family fight outside the police station. Tensions were high and the family needed immediate attention, but officers were busy pursuing leads. It became clear at that time more needed to be done to help victims and their families in the midst of endangered missing and abducted child cases.

"Our committee was primarily focused on law enforcement," said Christopher Minek, Northeast Ohio AMBER Alert Coordinator. "We decided we needed to expand our knowledge for the victims of the AMBER Alert."

Minek reached out to Gina DeJesus and her family to help with the plan. DeJesus was abducted in 2004 while walking to school and held in captivity for nine years with two other hostages in Cleveland, Ohio. Minek also gathered input from Jill Smialek of Cuyahoga County Witness Victims Services.

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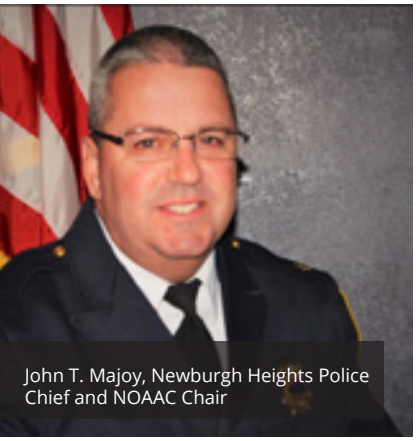
LEARNING FROM AN AMBER ALERT

Continued from page 3


John T. Majoy, Newburgh Heights Police Chief and NOAAC Chair

"Upon gaining her freedom, DeJesus has worked as a victim's advocate," said John T. Majoy, Newburgh Heights Police Chief and NOAAC Chair. "The concept of pairing her with a victim advocacy expert provides another dimension for law enforcement agencies."

The Family Response Plan was implemented in June 2018 and includes a standardized protocol for law enforcement and victim services' work with the family involved in an AMBER Alert. "The goal of the plan is to provide crisis stabilization and trauma informed communication by gathering information from families involved in an AMBER Alert," said Minek.

Phase one of the plan provides step-by-step instructions on how a victim or witness service representative contacts family members to assess their willingness to participate in the plan. The family is given information on how their answers can help improve the AMBER Alert program and offer insights for law enforcement and victim services to more effectively work with families of an abducted child in the future.

If the family agrees, an interviewer asks specific questions about what was helpful and what could have been done differently during the incident. The family is also told the interviewer is not with law enforcement and that the information they provide will not be used for the investigation or prosecution of the suspect.

The interviewer then compiles a summary for the family to review. Once the family approves the information, it is shared with the AMBER Alert Committee, who considers how best to incorporate the input toward improvement in the AMBER Alert program and related training.

"The families need to have a voice," said Majoy. "Families experience a number of challenges and questions during this time. It is important to instill hope and provide them a means of understanding what they are experiencing."

Phase two of the Family Response Plan is titled "Deploying Hope." One year after the alert, the interviewer contacts the survivor and family to assist in compiling a report to identify general themes of experiences following the incident, noting positive outcomes as well as places where gaps in support and recovery have been found.

The aim of the NOAAC plan shares important parallels with the work of the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program's (AATTAP) Family Roundtable initiative. Implemented in 2011, AATTAP's six Family Roundtable events held to date have brought together more than 180 survivors and family members to share experiences, offer critically important insights and develop formalized recommendations for law enforcement's interactions with the family during endangered missing and abducted child incidents.

Emphasizing the importance of incorporating families' recommendations into training for law enforcement and

Continued on page 16

AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

NAVAJO NATION SUCCESSFULLY ISSUES FIRST MISSING ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY

The Navajo Nation brought a nine-month-old baby safely back to his mother after issuing its first Endangered Missing Person Advisory. The Department of Emergency Management issued the advisory for Nickolias Elias Tom on September 26 after his non-custodial father took him and authorities determined the baby was in danger.

The advisory was issued at 7:13 a.m. and the baby was found safe by 5:14 p.m. The public and members of the media who signed up to receive the advisories were notified by text messages. Navajo officials said the new advisory is free, quick and worked flawlessly.

NEW AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY WEBSITE LAUNCHES

Be sure to check out the newly launched AMBER Alert in Indian Country website. The site offers a comprehensive array of resources, training and technical assistance information, and the latest news about the efforts and outcomes of AMBER Alert in Indian Country initatives.

You can visit the site at amber-ic.org and make sure you follow AMBER Alert in Indian Country on Facebook to stay up-to-date on news and training announcements.

FACES OF THE AMBER ALERT NETWORK

NEW YORK AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR HAS A LONG HISTORY OF HELPING CHILDREN IN PERIL

Joshua H. Kean is a senior investigator and has been a member of the New York State Police (NYSP) for 15 years. He is the supervisor of the Special Victims Unit and the NYS AMBER Alert Coordinator. Kean has assisted the NYSP Community Narcotics Enforcement Team with undercover operations involving drug sales and human trafficking. He is responsible for law enforcement training in the areas of child abuse and sexual offense investigations, elder abuse and the AMBER Alert. Kean also serves on the NYS Children's Justice Task Force, Sex Assault Response Team, Committee for Coordination of Police Services to Elderly Persons, Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking, and other advisory groups related to special victims.

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

New York State is unique because it is a very large state. We worked with our dedicated partners to split the state into 12 alert activation regions to ensure residents do not become desensitized. We want the people of New York to feel a sense of urgency with every activation.

We attribute our success to team work. We work very closely with the NYS Broadcasters Association, Office of Emergency Management, Sheriffs Association, Association of the Chiefs of Police, Missing Persons Clearinghouse, Lottery, Department of Transportation, and Thruway Authority. After every AMBER Alert, we have a review of that case with the investigating agency and our partners to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of our response and operations, and how we can do better. The NYS AMBER Alert program is shaped by and continues to improve because of these after-action reviews. We also have annual meetings with our partners to discuss past and current practices, as well as what we would like to see in the future.

A major contributor to the success we've experienced in New York is that we have a strong partnership with surrounding states. We have an agreement in place that if AMBER Alerts have been activated in surrounding states and they request us to activate, we activate.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO FIND MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?

My children are my motivation. I am a father of four; ages 18, 12, 11 and 9. I look at each case thinking, "If this was my child how would I want it handled?" I have always had a passion for helping and working with children. One of the first jobs I had as a teenager was a youth counselor. I strived to provide a safe and fun environment for the neighborhood children. I was a varsity high school baseball coach for a local high school and I am currently the head coach for my daughter's traveling softball team. The children I have worked with know they can come to me with anything without any

judgment. When I joined the NYSP I wanted to be the voice for those who didn't have one. I started working child abuse and child sexual assault cases in 2008 and became a certified child forensic interviewer to better serve child victims.

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

I have noticed in my short time as the AMBER Alert Coordinator that there is a need for training regarding the criteria for an AMBER Alert and how to utilize this tool.

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

I would like to provide training around the state on New York's AMBER Alert criteria and how to request an activation. In a child abduction, every second counts.

I would like to see all of the state AMBER Alert systems connected. Although we have a great working relationship with each state, activating an alert in another state requires us to contact that AMBER Coordinator and provide information. Then the other coordinator has to import all of the data into their system and send out the alert. If our systems were connected, we could just send the information electronically so they can review it and send the alert. This would cut minutes off of the process, which is so important when every second counts.

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 case with 16- and 18-year-old suspects who took a 12-year-old child early in the morning, stole a gun, and a vehicle that contained another gun. We activated an AMBER Alert and recovered the child within a few hours. Because of the AMBER Alert, the suspects hid in a vacant house in the woods near one of their homes. When one suspect attempted to go home to get supplies, the police were contacted by his mother and subsequently located the child and suspects.

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?

I have more than 15 years of law enforcement experience and more than 11 years dealing directly with children who have been physically and sexually abused and/or neglected and maltreated. There is no greater feeling than being part of a case that brings a child home safe.

HOW HAS TRAINING HELPED YOU IN AMBER ALERT CASES?

Training has helped our unit prepare for cases involving abducted children. We regularly practice weekly by giving each other different scenarios and working through a mock activation. We do this so that in real cases, when the criteria to activate are present, we can execute the AMBER Alert process with ease and accuracy.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER AMBER ALERT PARTNERS?

Get to know your bordering states AMBER Alert Coordinators and Missing Person Clearinghouse Managers. One of the most valuable events since becoming the NYS AMBER Alert Coordinator was attending the National AMBER Alert Symposium. I could put names with faces, develop lasting relationships, and learn from their experiences. I look forward to the next one.

FACES OF THE AMBER ALERT NETWORK

KANSAS AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR SAYS YOU HAVE TO EVOLVE TO KEEP FINDING ABDUCTED CHILDREN

William "Bill" Smith has been the Kansas AMBER Alert coordinator since 2013. He is the Special Agent in Charge at the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI), managing field investigations spanning 36 counties in Northeast Kansas. Smith has been with KBI since 2001, and also served with the Dallas Police Department. His KBI duties have included Special Operations, Cyber Crimes, and Field Investigations.

Smith graduated from Kansas State University and is an alumnus of the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command. He holds a Lean Six Sigma certification in Performance and Process Improvement from the University of Kansas.

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

The KBI started the Kansas AMBER Alert program in 2002 and the blueprint for success has steadily evolved. The Kansas program is unique in how it harnesses available technology. We focus on using a robust, flexible and mobile-friendly system for the AMBER Alert. The Kansas Information Consortium (KIC) developed a custom-built program that allows us to rapidly load important information and pictures from any internet capable device anywhere. This allows us to swiftly deliver the alert to the media and public. During a child abduction, minutes matter and we seek to shave them by using technology, strong executive leadership, continuous process improvement and resilient partnerships.

Leadership is the backbone in the collaborative success between law enforcement, media, technical partners, advocacy groups and citizens. KBI Director Kirk Thompson and Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt spearhead an executive committee that facilitates the success of the Kansas AMBER Alert Program.

We continually implement changes to improve each AMBER Alert activation and our training by measuring and mapping everything involved in the alert. Our formalized evaluation strategy increases speed, eliminates waste, reduces error and cultivates efficiency.

Partnerships with all stakeholders are key to the program's success. From the patrol officer to the IT professional, thoughtful engagements and training increases their response, participation and assistance. This approach leads to better outcomes when it counts.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO FIND MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?

When the call comes in about an abducted child, I know KBI special agents and our AMBER Alert program can make the

difference in saving a child's life. It is very motivating, emotionally intense and yet empowering to feel the responsibility to act decisively and concretely during a chaotic event, to striving to achieve a positive outcome.

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

The number one challenge facing all AMBER Alert programs is the rapid evolution of how the public is receiving media and messages. Looking back sixteen years to 2002, we were using flip phones and no one used text messages. Now we carry computers in our pockets with amazing capabilities. We need to prepare for where technology and communication are headed in the next 16 years and decide where to invest in order to move the program in a similar direction.

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

I would like to see the Department of Justice AMBER Alert initiative evolve nationally in new ways to broaden and deepen support for the states. A properly-funded national initiative could build a "plug-and-play" infrastructure for all programs. A nationwide program could evolve far more rapidly than 50-plus separate programs.

PLEASE SHARE DETAILS ABOUT YOUR MOST MEMORABLE SUCCESS STORY IN WORKING A MISSING CHILD CASE. WHAT WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED?

In 2016, a local Police Department contacted KBI and requested an AMBER Alert. They shared that two children were removed from school by their father. The children had been in the custody of their mother, and the father was reported to not have custody. Prior to that day, the father allegedly made a series of very threatening statements to the mother about harming the children.

This combination of facts led KBI to approve and launch an AMBER Alert. KBI and other law enforcement agencies moved swiftly to locate the children. The alert was launched 31 minutes after the request, and 16 minutes later the father and children were located safely. This alert was memorable because of the speed of the request and subsequent speed of the AMBER Alert and investigative response.

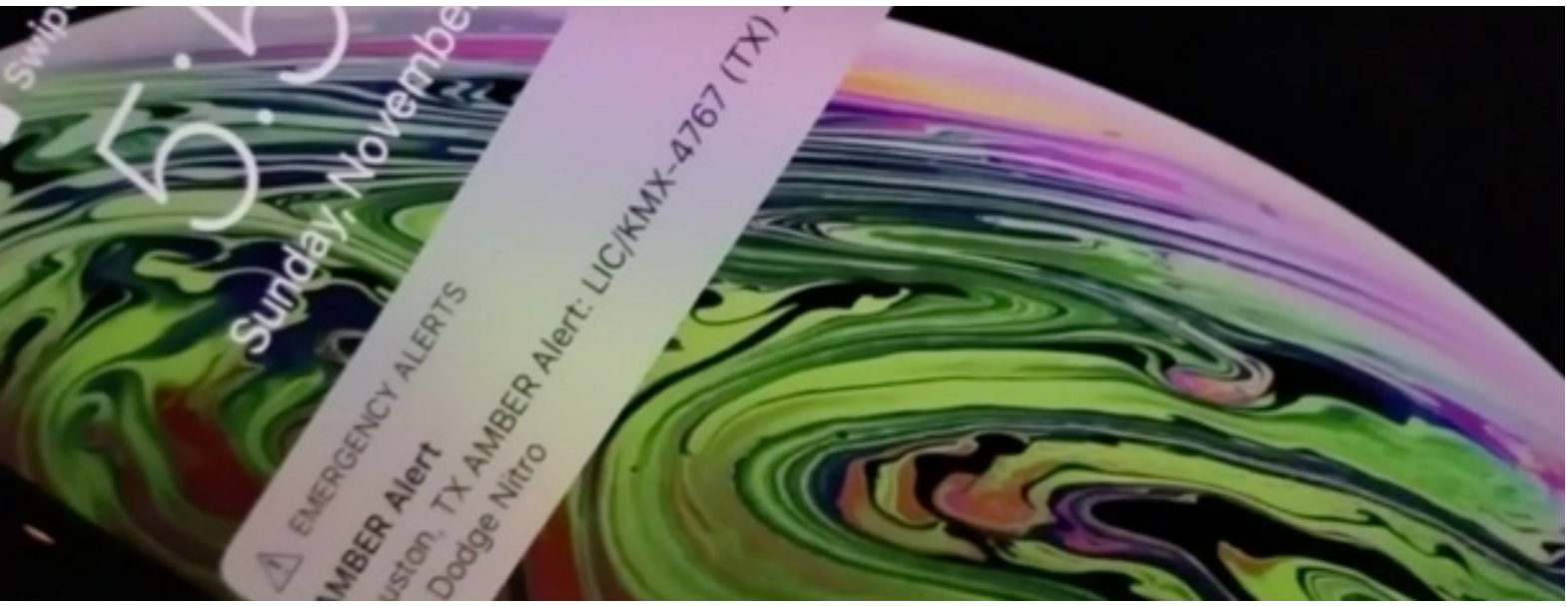
HOW HAVE YOUR CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING YOUR WORK AS AN AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR, STRENGTHENED YOUR COMMITMENT TO HELPING ENDANGERED MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?

Everything I have seen and done in the last five years as an AMBER Alert Coordinator has strengthened my commitment to children. I know timely actions of law enforcement, media, technical partners, advocacy groups and citizens can make the difference--and the AMBER Alert leads from the front.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER AMBER ALERT PARTNERS?

Be introspective. Learn about everything that occurs within your realm of control as it relates to AMBER Alert. Understand how to continuously evolve. Be a statesperson, and build meaningful bridges with all partners - because an AMBER Alert cannot succeed if the message does not proliferate through all technology and media allies.

AMBER ALERT ON THE FRONT LINES:



HOUSTON POLICE DIG DEEPER TO ISSUE AMBER ALERT AND RESCUE ENDANGERED TODDLER

Thanksgiving weekend is usually the time for family reunions, but for one Houston family it involved a frantic search for a two-year-old child. During the evening of November 24, 2018, Jatavia Bookman called the Houston Police Department (HPD) to report Prentis Curtis had taken her son Jeremiah Lambert and the family's blue Dodge Nitro without permission.

"Initially this case was treated at a missing persons case," said HPD Homicide Lieutenant Zachary Becker." Jeremiah's mother at first did not consider him at risk because he was in the care of a trusted family member who was unexpectedly late returning home."

That night the family started handing out fliers at the apartment to see if anyone had seen the child. The following day Jeremiah was still missing and the family called police at 12:36 pm. to request an AMBER Alert.

"The mother eventually told us the person was not an actual family member and she believed he was suicidal," said Becker.

HPD contacted Beth Alberts, CEO of Texas Center for the Missing (TCM) and director of the Houston Regional AMBER Alert Program, at 4:36 p.m. with the request to issue an AMBER Alert. Alberts determined the case met the criteria for activation.

"The suspect was a felon out on parole and under ankle-monitoring supervision with a curfew," said Alberts. "He violated curfew and was seen on a video in a heavily drug-infested area after abducting the child."

Alberts issued the alert at 4:54 p.m. by entering the information in the Houston Regional AMBER Alert online distribution system. The system sends emails to all regional media, law enforcement, transportation and individuals who sign

up to receive the alert. She placed the information on Facebook and Twitter, and also contacted the FBI and the National Center for Missing and Endangered Child to send out a Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA).

A citizen saw the alert on the local news and called 911 after recognizing the suspect and vehicle. Police found Curtis and the child at a local hotel at 6:03 p.m.

"I'm grateful the system worked so well and so quickly," said Becker. "We had the child located and recovered unharmed within about one hour."

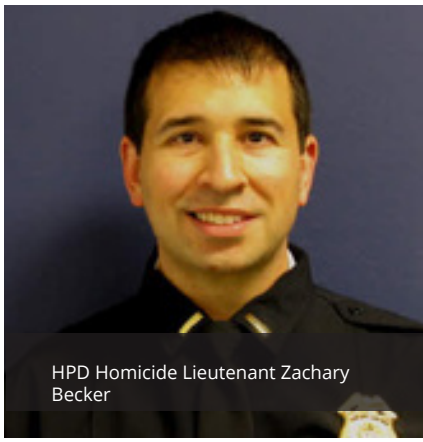
The family was relieved Jeremiah was safe after hours of panic and worry. "I can breathe now. I felt like I was dead out here. I couldn't breathe. I can breathe now," the victim's grandmother, Avis Knox, told the local KTRK news station.

The alert was canceled at 6:26 p.m. and TCM sent an after-action report to police at 7 p.m.

"I am relieved he is safe and happy to have been a part of his recovery," added Alberts. "I am also grateful the suspect is in custody and has been charged with kidnapping."

HPD says having a close relationship and getting training from TCM helped in the quick recovery of the victim. The supervisor involved in this case had taken part in an AMBER Alert training for 20 new officers on November 14, just 10 day s before the event.

"Having that pre-existing relationship, along with frequent training, reduces obstacles and makes our operation function quickly and smoothly when it's critical," said Becker. Even though this AMBER Alert was successful, Becker said HPD learned some valuable lessons. In examining the patrol officer's initial interview and operating from the mother's initial position that the child was safe, they recognized more intensive interview is needed early on in these types of cases.



HPD Homicide Lieutenant Zachary Becker

"This case highlighted for us the need to have a much more thorough interview with the reporting person from the start," he said. "Having an investigator conduct a comprehensive interview in a formal environment would likely have led to learning pertinent facts sooner and probably a quicker resolution to the entire incident."

Alberts said this incident shows the AMBER Alert is an effective tool for finding endangered children quickly and safely, but emphasized the importance of AMBER Alert program personnel collaborating closely with the law enforcement agency handling the investigation. "True cooperation can make the difference between life and death for some of these vulnerable children."

The Houston Regional AMBER Alert program began on December 7, 2001, and has issued 188 alerts for 228 children with a 95 percent successful recovery rate. To date, 216 children have been recovered alive,

Continued on page 16

AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA CAN NOW ISSUE AMBER ALERTS

The Republic of Srpska joined AMBER Alert Europe and can now issue child abduction alerts. Also known as the Serb Republic, the country launched its system on September 5, 2018. “We look forward to working with the Republic’s law enforcement experts towards our mission to reach zero missing children in Europe,” said Frank Hoen, founder of AMBER Alert Europe. The Republic is the 18th country to join the European network.

DUTCH AMBER ALERT CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

AMBER Alert Netherlands is now ten years old. The Dutch AMBER Alert was one of the first child abduction notification programs in Europe and is the founding partner of AMBER Alert Europe. The Dutch alert also inspired AMBER Alert programs in Luxembourg, Malta and Slovakia. The AMBER Alert program was launched on November 11, 2018, and has issued 25 AMBER Alerts and 981 Missing Child Alerts. To dates, 94 percent of the children have been found successfully.

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN USING NEW TOOL TO FIND CHILDREN

The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) is now using a global platform that combines artificial intelligence (AI) and digital advertising to locate missing and abducted children. THE GMCNgine™ uses geo-targeting and dynamic ad technology to get missing children alerts to the right communities quickly. The system also uses AI to scan millions of images on the web to locate pictures that resemble missing children. “The GMCNgine™ sparks global change in missing child investigations,” said Maura Harty, President and Chief Executive Officer for ICMEC. The tool will be used in 29 countries.

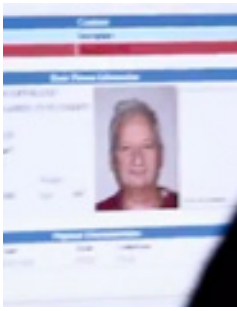
GREAT BRITAIN LAUNCHES NEW EDUCATION PROGRAM TO TEACH FAMILIES ABOUT CHILD ABDUCTIONS

Great Britain is now using "Clever Never Goes" to warn parents and children about child abductions. The non-profit Action Against Abduction says the new program is more effective than the past "Stranger Danger" public campaigns. The new program involves children and adults watching videos showing scenarios and then asks children to decide how to react. More than 150 schools have already signed up for the program.

JAMAICAN ACTIVISTS DEMAND MORE HELP TO PROTECT ABDUCTED CHILDREN

The Jamaican activist group 'Hear the Children's Cry' is asking national leaders to convene an Emergency Child Summit after the abduction and murder of a 14-year-old girl. Raven Wilson was reported missing and later found dead in a garbage bag. Activist and leader of the Hear Children's Cry group, Betty Ann Blaine, wants to bring all stakeholders together to enact urgent solutions to protect children and safeguard their lives.

FAMILY PUSHES FOR A SILVER ALERT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



The family of an 82-year-old woman who died after wandering away from her car is asking for implementation of a Silver Alert program to help find endangered missing elderly people. Gladys Barman disappeared in July 2018 and her body was found one month later in a lake. Silver Alerts are being used in Manitoba and Alberta.

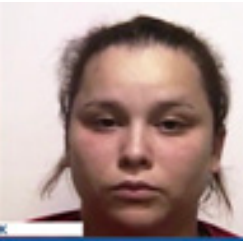
AMBER ALERT BRIEFS

NORTH CAROLINA POLICE ASK PUBLIC TO STOP SPREADING MISINFORMATION IN AMBER ALERT CASE

Lumberton, North Carolina, police said false information being shared by the public about an AMBER Alert case hampered their investigation. An alert was issued for Hania Aguilar on November 5, 2018, after she was abducted from her home. People started spread stories that a girl who looked like the victim was in Charlotte. Police said there was no reason to believe the information was correct. The 13-year-old was found dead one month later in the same county as her home.

CHICAGO TV STATION MAY FACE FINE FOR USING EMERGENCY ALERT TONES IN ADVERTISING

The Chicago TV station WBBM could face a fine or penalty of using the Emergency Alert System (EAS) signal in a tease about an AMBER Alert issued and canceled that day. The FCC forbids the "false, fraudulent or unauthorized use of the signal. WBBM's president said using the signal was a mistake and steps have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Viacom, NBC and ESPN were fined in $1.9 million in 2014 for using the EAS signal in a commercial; and a Bowling Green, Kentucky, TV station was fined $39,000 in 2013 for the same act. TBS was fined $25,000 that same year for using the signal in a promotional spot for Conan O'Brien's talk show.



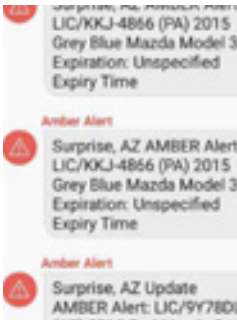
FLORIDA WOMAN CHARGED FOR CAUSING FALSE AMBER ALERT

Live Oak, Florida, police arrested a woman for falsely claiming her children had been taken, resulting in the issuance of an AMBER Alert. On September 28, 2018, Roseangel Sanchez was booked for fraud, passing forged checks and false reporting. Sanchez told police her seven-year-old son and six-year-old daughter were taken by a group of people. She later told police she told the lie in an attempt to get out of check fraud charges. The children were later found safe.

WISCONSIN POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES DONATION FOR LICENSE PLATE READERS

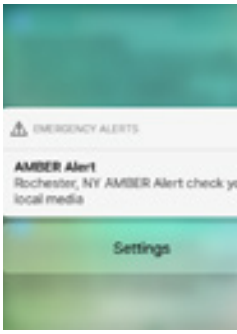
The Lake Mills Community Foundation in Wisconsin donated $19,490 for their local police department to buy automated license plate readers. The system will allow the Lake Mills police to identify stolen cars, cars linked to AMBER Alerts, and other crimes. Police are notified when the reader finds a license plate and why the car is wanted.

ARIZONA AMBER ALERT MESSAGING PROBLEMS RESULT FROM ISSUES WITH CELLULAR PROVIDERS



The Arizona Department of Public Safety said cell phone providers were responsible for problems with AMBER Alerts issued in September 2018, in which people received multiple AMBER Alert messages, with some receiving the alerts continuously throughout the day following the original alert. Arizona officials urged cell phone users who had problems to contact their cell phone provider, and not to disable these important and potentially life-saving alerts on their mobile devices.

TECHNOLOGY GLITCH PREVENTS SOME PEOPLE FROM GETTING AMBER ALERT IN NEW YORK



Rochester, New York, police issued an AMBER Alert on November 20, 2018, but people using one cell phone service provider did not receive it. The missing 18-month-old girl was later found safe and returned to her mother. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) said it was a technology glitch with a single provider that prevented people from receiving the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA). NCMEC suspects that in some cases, people did not get a good connection in their area or may have opted out of receiving the alerts.

victim advocacy professionals, AATTAP Administrator Jim Walters believes their insights have had a direct impact on resolving other child abduction cases. "There is probably no more important function we carry out than taking the time to listen to families about their individual cases. We learn so much from their tragedies and at the same time we allow them the opportunity to gather with other families who have been down the same terrible path they have travelled. By pre-planning we can cut down the time, stress and uncertainty that comes with not knowing what to do. Time is of the essence and having a plan in place saves time, it is as simple as that."

NCMEC believes it is sound practice for each AMBER Alert program to have a formalized family response plan. NCMEC Vice President of the Missing Children Division, Bob Lowery, believes these plans should be used in a multidisciplinary manner during an alert to minimize the trauma of the situation.

"Families that have experienced an AMBER Alert are uniquely suited to provide insight, concerns, and recommendations for AMBER Alert partners," said Lowery. "The recovery of the missing child is the beginning of what can be a lengthy reunification process as the child and family begin to come to terms with the crime and what this means moving forward."

Walters also encourages other AMBER Alert programs to create their own family response plans. "Plans are so important because they put things into place so they can be acted upon, so everyone knows what they can do to ensure the safety of the child."

Chief Majoy said the Family Response Plan will continue to be a work in progress. He said it is important to share the NOAAC plan with other AMBER Alert partners; and in return he hopes to learn from them as well. "We all have a common goal in the safe return of the victim."

eight were recovered deceased, but were discovered more quickly because of the alert. Four children remain missing.

Everyone involved in the safe recovery of Jeremiah says they will always be motivated to do everything possible to find missing children.

"One of my favorite parts about being an AMBER Alert Coordinator is that feeling of being a part of a team of people all working toward the same goal—quickly recovering a missing child," said Alberts. "I am incredibly proud to be involved in the AMBER Alert program."

"Children are the most vulnerable and innocent people in our society," concluded Becker. "Knowing how quick action can potentially prevent terrible outcomes motivates me to try to work these cases as aggressively as possible."