

Policy Name:	AMBER ALERTS		
Policy #:	OP 4.1	Last Updated:	2022-01-27
Issued By:	COMMUNITY POLICING BUREAU	Approved By:	SURREY POLICE BOARD
		Review Frequency:	AS REQUIRED

RELATED POLICIES

OP 4.34.7 *Hostage-Taking/Kidnapping*

OP 4.35 *Missing Persons*

1. PURPOSE

1.1. AMBER Alert is an investigative tool used in cases of stranger abductions of children, or parental abductions of children in life-threatening situations. It is a voluntary cooperative program between police and broadcasters that sends an emergency alert to the public when a child has been abducted and is believed to be in danger of serious bodily harm or death. Details such as vehicle descriptions and descriptors of the abductor(s) and victim(s) are disseminated to other police agencies, as well as to the public via various notification systems (cell phone alerts, TV and radio broadcasts, etc.). Certain Activation Criteria must be met before an AMBER alert is issued.

1.2. This policy provides Surrey Police Service (SPS) Members with direction for public notifications via AMBER Alert in a manner consistent with public safety.

2. SCOPE

2.1. This policy applies to all SPS Employees.

3. POLICY

3.1. SPS will only activate AMBER Alert in abduction cases which meet the established Activation Criteria.

3.2. In British Columbia, the RCMP “E” Division Major Crime Section (BC Police Missing Persons Centre) is responsible for the AMBER Alert program for both the RCMP and municipal police agencies. All requests for an AMBER Alert activation must be made to the RCMP’s Division Duty Officer (DDO) through the AMBER Alert line **S. 15**. The request must meet the Activation Criteria

and must be made by the SPS Authorized Officer or their designate. The Activation will be authorized by the DDO through the AMBER Alert line.

- 3.3. Unless otherwise determined by the Authorized Officer, after the AMBER Alert is authorized by the DDO, the Watch Commander or the SPS Manager – Operational Communications Centre (OCC) will be responsible for the AMBER Alert liaison function and will coordinate with the RCMP's AMBER Alert activation team. The Watch Commander or OCC Manager may delegate these liaison functions.

4. PROCEDURE

Activation Criteria, Authorization, and Cancellation Criteria

- 4.1. Activation of an AMBER Alert may be requested by the Authorized Officer only when all Activation Criteria have been met. The five minimum Activation Criteria for an AMBER Alert are:
 - i. the victim is under the age of 18 years;
 - ii. police have reasonable grounds to believe that the victim has been abducted;
 - iii. police have reasonable grounds to believe that the victim is in imminent danger;
 - iv. police have enough descriptive information about the victim and the abductor and/or an involved vehicle to believe that a broadcast to the public could help to locate the victim; and
 - v. police believe that the AMBER Alert can be issued in a time frame that would provide a reasonable expectation that the child can be returned and/or the abductor can be apprehended.
- 4.2. The Authorized Officer or their delegate is responsible for requesting the activation and the cancellation of the AMBER Alert and will oversee the AMBER Alert protocol while it is active.
- 4.3. Where an agency outside of Surrey requests that SPS activate an AMBER Alert within Surrey, the Authorized Officer will ensure the Activation Criteria have been met before requesting the activation of an AMBER Alert.
- 4.4. One or more of the following criteria must exist before cancelling an AMBER Alert:
 - i. the victim has been recovered;
 - ii. the abductor and the victim have left the Lower Mainland;
 - iii. twenty-four (24) hours have passed since the AMBER Alert was updated, or
 - iv. the Authorized Officer, for any reason, believes cancellation to be appropriate.
- 4.5. An AMBER Alert may be cancelled only by the Authorized Officer or their delegate and only when one or more of the cancellation criteria are met.

AMBER Alert Duties

Member / Investigator

- 4.6. The assigned Member must attend the call and establish the circumstances of the incident. Immediately upon forming the belief that the Activation Criteria for an AMBER Alert exist, the Member must notify their Supervisor and who will confirm the Member's findings.
- 4.7. The assigned Member must immediately obtain as much of the following information as possible and relay it to the Watch Commander and to the OCC Operator, and document it on the PRIME General Occurrence (GO) report:
- i. location, date and time the child was last seen;
 - ii. child's full name, nicknames, age, gender, race, height, weight, hair/eye colour and any other physical descriptors;
 - iii. information about the child's medical issues, including any required medications;
 - iv. description of child's clothing, jewelry, piercings, tattoos, glasses, facial hair, and other identifying information;
 - v. description of personal belongings in the possession of the child when last seen e.g., backpack, bags, cell phones (with phone number), notebooks, games;
 - vi. recent photograph(s) of the child, including a facial close-up if available;
 - vii. abductor's name (if known), age, gender, race, height, weight;
 - viii. abductor's clothing, dress, jewelry, body piercing, tattoos, facial hair, glasses, or any other identifying information;
 - ix. photo/video of the abductor and/or vehicle, if available;
 - x. last known direction of travel and possible destinations;
 - xi. if traveling in a vehicle, a description of the vehicle including year, make, model, licence plate, type, colour, distinctive modifications, stickers, personalization, or damage; and
 - xii. any other information that would assist the police and/or the public in identifying and locating the suspect and/or victim.

Frontline Supervisor

- 4.8. A frontline Supervisor who has been notified of the incident must ensure the investigation has determined that all Activation Criteria for an AMBER Alert have been met.
- 4.9. The Supervisor must notify the Duty Officer immediately of the circumstances of the file.
- 4.10. The Supervisor must ensure that the assigned Member has gathered and documented as many of the details noted in 4.7 as possible.

Duty Officer

- 4.11. Once satisfied that all Activation Criteria have been met, the Duty Officer may authorize an AMBER Alert activation, or contact the Authorized Officer to request an AMBER Alert activation.

- 4.12. If approved by the Authorized Officer, the Duty Officer will call out a replacement Duty Officer to assume responsibility for frontline patrol Members if necessary, along with other required resources.
- 4.13. Once an AMBER Alert authorization is approved by the Authorized Officer, the Duty Officer must maintain communications with the AMBER Alert Activation Team, the RCMP Divisional Duty Officer (DDO), the Operational Communications Centre (OCC) Manager, E-Comm Manager, and the SPS Media Relations Officer (MRO), if requested to do so by the Authorized Officer.
- 4.14. The Duty Officer must notify the OCC Operator to sound the alert tone on all dispatch radio channels and broadcast to all Members that an AMBER Alert has been activated and provide brief details of the circumstances.
- 4.15. The Duty Officer will notify the Investigative Services Bureau Officer in Charge to assume conduct of the abduction investigation.
- 4.16. The Duty Officer will notify all Members and broadcast to all units to minimize radio transmissions which are not related to the AMBER Alert, other than radio transmissions of an urgent nature, until such time as a dispatcher is assigned to handle communications.
- 4.17. If the MRO is unavailable, the Duty Officer will perform the duties of the MRO until one is available.

Authorized Officer

- 4.18. The Authorized Officer is responsible for reviewing the information provided by the Duty Officer to confirm that all Activation Criteria have been met and notifying the Manager – OCC that an AMBER Alert will be issued.
- 4.19. The Authorized Officer must contact the AMBER Alert Activation Team **S. 15** to initiate the activation and communicate to the RCMP DDO the Activation Criteria and other pertinent details from the investigator, along with the following information:
 - i. a photo of the victim and/or abductor and/or vehicle, for inclusion in the media dissemination;
 - ii. the telephone number to be given to the public (cellphone number or established tip-line number); and
 - iii. the name and contact number of the SPS MRO who will field media inquiries regarding the investigation.
- 4.20. The Authorized Officer must notify the OCC Operator, CPIC Unit staff, or after-hours E-Comm Manager, to send a CPIC fan-out to E DIV OCC for province-wide dissemination with details of the incident.

- 4.21. The Authorized Officer or delegate must contact the 24/7 Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) Risk Assessment line at **S. 15** and notify CBSA of the impending AMBER Alert and details.
- 4.22. If necessary, the Authorized Officer is responsible for arranging for and/or approving additional resources to handle increased workloads resulting from the AMBER Alert.
- 4.23. The Authorized Officer must remain updated on the status of the investigation by reviewing the AMBER Alert when new information is received to determine if it should remain active or be cancelled.
- 4.24. If information is received that the abductor and the victim have left the Lower Mainland but may be in another known jurisdiction, the Authorized Officer must consider requesting assistance from the law enforcement agency in the new area requesting activation of an AMBER Alert in that area.

AMBER Alert Cancellation

- 4.25. When one or more of the cancellation criteria are met, the Authorized Officer must:
- i. contact the AMBER Alert Activation Team to cancel the AMBER Alert;
 - ii. ensure that the OCC Manager, E-Comm Manager, the CPIC Unit, and the MRO are notified; and
 - iii. request that the OCC create a CPIC fan-out canceling the AMBER Alert and have it sent to E DIV OCC for Province-wide dissemination.

OCC Operator, CPIC Unit Employees, or E-Comm Staff

- 4.26. OCC Operators and CPIC Unit staff (Employees) or E-Comm staff receiving information that an AMBER Alert is pending must immediately add the victim, suspect, and vehicle to CPIC, and update the CPIC entry as required.
- 4.27. Employees or E-Comm staff must prepare a “Fan-Out” message with the detailed information about the AMBER Alert into a CPIC message template and send it to E DIV OCC **S. 15** for province-wide dissemination, and to CBSA **S. 15**.
- 4.28. Employees or E-Comm staff are responsible for sending an urgent Off-Line Search (OLS) Request to the OLS Unit at **S. 15** (Attention: Support Section) and to **S. 15** (BC/Yukon CPIC Field Ops Section), requesting an urgent off-line search dating back one month for:
- i. the abductor and/or their vehicle;
 - ii. the victim; and
 - iii. the parents of the victim.
- 4.29. Employees or E-Comm staff must also include the file number, legal justification for the search, type of investigation, the time frame of the search, whether the search is in relation to a possible breach of CPIC policy, the priority level (e.g., “Urgent”) of the search, the information of the

requester (phone/fax numbers and email address), the preferred delivery method of the OLS results (email or fax), and immediately forward the results of the off-line search to the assigned Member once they are received.

Media Relations Officer

4.30. An MRO must be identified for the AMBER Alert to be activated.

4.31. In the absence of an MRO, the Duty Officer will perform the Media Relations duties.

4.32. The MRO is responsible for preparing and broadcasting a Public Appeal for information after coordinating with the Duty Officer and/or Authorized Officer regarding the communications strategy.

4.33. The MRO will field all inquiries from the media about the AMBER Alert and provide AMBER Alert updates to the media and the public when necessary.

Investigative Services Bureau

4.34. The Officer in Charge, Investigative Services Bureau, will assign investigators to conduct the abduction investigation using major crime investigative procedures.

AMBER Alert Review

4.35. Following cancellation of the AMBER Alert, the Authorized Officer at their discretion will convene a debriefing to review the handling of the investigation and the effectiveness of the AMBER Alert protocol and determine whether amendments to this policy are required.

Response to an Outside Agency's AMBER Alert

4.36. If another agency activates an AMBER Alert, the Duty Officer will ensure all Members are aware of the AMBER Alert and are actively engaged in searching for the victim and suspect if they are believed to be in SPS jurisdiction.

4.37. Upon receipt of an AMBER Alert activation message issued by another agency, OCC will:

- i. broadcast the AMBER Alert details to Members, ensuring that all Members acknowledge the transmission; and
- ii. send a copy of the CPIC message to all on-duty Members' MDTs.

4.38. The Duty Officer shall notify the Authorized Officer for information purposes only. In the event of an after-hours incident, the Duty Officer will also pass the information to the oncoming dayshift Duty Officer who will provide updates to the Authorized Officer.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

“Abduction” means an incident where a child is removed from their environment without the permission of the child’s legal guardian or representative.

“Activation Criteria” means the following five minimum requirements to activate an AMBER Alert:

- a) the victim is under the age of 18 years;
- b) police have reasonable grounds to believe that the victim has been abducted;
- c) police have reasonable grounds to believe that the victim is in imminent danger;
- d) police have obtained enough descriptive information about the victim and either the abductor or an involved vehicle to believe that dissemination to the public could help to locate the victim; and
- e) police believe that the AMBER Alert can be issued in a time frame that would provide reasonable expectation that the child could be returned and/or the abductor could be apprehended.

“Authorized Officer” means the following officers who are immediately available and who have the authority to activate an AMBER Alert when all Activation Criteria are met:

- a) the Duty Officer;
- b) the Deputy Chief Constable, Investigative Services Bureau or their designate;
- c) the Chief Constable; or
- d) any Superintendent or Inspector immediately available.

“Cancellation Criteria” means one or more of the following criteria:

- a) victim has been recovered;
- b) the abductor and the victim have left the Lower Mainland;
- c) twenty-four hours have passed since the AMBER Alert was activated; or
- d) the Authorized Officer, for any reason, believes cancellation is appropriate.

“DDO” means the RCMP Divisional Duty Officer.

“Duty Officer” means the Frontline Policing Inspector.

“Employee” means a sworn Member or Civilian Employee appointed by the Surrey Police Board.

“Member” means a sworn Police Officer appointed by the Surrey Police Board.

“SPS” means the Surrey Police Service.

APPENDIX B: REFERENCES

Canadian Police Information Centre. (2018). *CPIC User Manual*. Policy and Procedures Unit.

Missing Persons Act, S.B.C. 2014, c. 2

RCMP "E" Division Operational Manual ch. 2.8 - *Child Abductions (AMBER Alert Program)*

RCMP National Operational Manual ch.37.9 *AMBER Alert*