



AMBER ALERT TIMELINE

1996

- The AMBER Alert System began in Dallas-Fort Worth when broadcasters teamed with local police to develop an early warning system to help find abducted children.
- AMBER stands for America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response. The acronym was created as a legacy to 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, who was kidnapped while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas, and then brutally murdered.
- Other states and communities began setting up their own AMBER Alert plans as the idea was adopted across the Nation.

1996-2001

- The progress on developing and implementing AMBER plans throughout the country was not significant during this time. At the end of 2001, only four states had statewide AMBER plans.

2002

- The first ever White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children. AMBER Alert became nationally focused.

In conjunction with the conference, the President requested that the U.S. Attorney General appoint the first National AMBER Alert Coordinator. Deborah J. Daniels, Assistant Attorney General for the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs was appointed the first National AMBER Alert Coordinator.

2003

- On April 30, the President signed into law the PROTECT Act, which

comprehensively strengthened law enforcement's ability to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and punish violent crimes committed against children.

- The PROTECT Act codified the previously-established National AMBER Alert Coordinator role in the Department of Justice. The law tasked the Coordinator to:
 - ❖ Facilitate the development of the AMBER network
 - ❖ Support development of state AMBER plans and efforts
 - ❖ Help eliminate geographic gaps in AMBER networks
 - ❖ Provide regional AMBER network coordination
 - ❖ Establish guidance on criteria for issuing an AMBER Alert

2004

- Guidance was provided to law enforcement, broadcasters, transportation officials, and the public on AMBER Alert activation criteria.
- The Department of Justice does not mandate one set of criteria; however, as directed by the PROTECT Act and at the request of state coordinators, the Department developed and shared its suggested criteria for the issuance of AMBER Alerts.
- The guidance is designed to create a uniform, interoperable network of plans across the country and minimize potentially deadly delays due to confusion among varying jurisdictions.
- The Department's recommended criteria for issuing AMBER Alerts are as follows:
 - ❖ Law enforcement must confirm that an abduction has taken place

- ❖ The child is at risk of serious injury or death
- ❖ There is sufficient descriptive information of the child, captor or captor's vehicle to issue an Alert.
- ❖ The child must be 17 years old or younger.
- ❖ It is recommended that the child's name and other critical data be entered immediately into the FBI's National Crime Information Center. Information describing the circumstances of the abduction should be entered, and the case flagged as a Child Abduction.

- Most states' guidelines adhere closely to the U.S. Department of Justice's recommended guidelines.

2005

- In February, Hawaii became the 50th state to complete its statewide AMBER Alert plan, creating a network of plans nationwide.
- In May, the Department of Justice joined the wireless industry and other government officials to announce that wireless users can opt to receive geographically specified AMBER Alert messages on their wireless devices through an AMBER Alert wireless messaging system.
- In November, the Department launched an initiative to train Child Abduction Response Teams (CART) nationwide, designed to assist local law enforcement agencies responding to incidents of missing and abducted children. CART can be used for all missing children's cases; it can be deployed as part of an AMBER Alert, or when a child is abducted or missing but the abduction or disappearance does not meet the AMBER Alert criteria.

2006

- On May 25, the Department of Justice, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the Wireless Foundation teamed up with the Ad Council to launch a national, multi-

media public service campaign, including radio, newspaper, outdoor and Internet advertising to encourage the public to sign up to receive wireless AMBER Alerts.

- On July 19, the Department announced that it had initiated talks with tribal leaders to bring AMBER Alert to Indian Country to create a seamless AMBER Alert network nationwide.

2007

- On September 14, as part of the U.S. Department of Justice AMBER Alert in Indian Country Initiative, ten Tribal sites were selected to serve as demonstration sites for other Native American communities.
- NCMEC, the authorized agent of the Department of Justice responsible for the secondary distribution of AMBER Alerts, established a partnership with MySpace and the Transportation Security Administration to expand the secondary distribution network.

2008

- In May, the Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA) joined the AMBER Alert secondary distribution network.

2009

- All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have AMBER Alert plans. The AMBER Alert system has also been adopted in the Canadian provinces and continues to expand into the Mexican border states.

For more information visit
www.amberalert.gov

Updated January 2010