



## Progress Report on the National AMBER Alert Strategy

The AMBER Alert program became a nationally coordinated effort in October 2002 at the first-ever White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children, when President Bush directed the Attorney General to designate a Department of Justice (DOJ) official to lead the effort in expanding the AMBER Alert system nationwide.

Regina B. Schofield, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is the current National AMBER Alert Coordinator. The substantial increase in the number of recovered children since the strategy was put in place is evidence that the national coordination is working well. More than 265 children have been recovered since AMBER Alert began in 1996. ***Over 88 percent of the total number of successful recoveries to date has occurred since October 2002, when AMBER Alert became a coordinated national effort.*** This progress is attributable to better coordination and training at every level, increased public awareness, technological advances, and cooperation among law enforcement, transportation officials, and broadcasters. The collaboration has also made a remarkable difference in the number of children recovered. At the end of 2001, there were only four statewide plans, and now 50 states have statewide plans in place.

### National AMBER Alert Strategy 2002-2005

- The initial national AMBER Alert strategy, to assess current AMBER activity, to create a coordinated AMBER network and to communicate “lessons learned” was implemented in 2002 and completed in 2005. The status of current AMBER activity was assessed at every level and an implementation plan to monitor, report, and track national AMBER Alert progress was developed.
- To create a coordinated AMBER network, the National AMBER Alert Coordinator issued criteria guidance on the issuance of AMBER Alerts. Federal, state and local partnerships were established, agreements were promoted among states and communities and training was provided to create a seamless communications network. DOJ partnered with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to create a mechanism for the secondary distribution of AMBER Alerts, and also partnered with NCMEC and CTIA-The Wireless Association to launch the Wireless AMBER Alert initiative, to enlist wireless subscribers for participation in AMBER Alerts.
- To communicate “lessons learned,” the National AMBER Alert Coordinator convened two national training conferences. The national strategy was communicated at dozens of regional training conferences for law enforcement, broadcasters and transportation officials. To raise public awareness, the Web site, [www.amberalert.gov](http://www.amberalert.gov), was created, new AMBER Alert publications and public service announcements were distributed and progress reports were sent to the Congress and the White House. For more detailed progress reports from 2002-2005, please visit [www.amberalert.gov](http://www.amberalert.gov).

## **Current AMBER Alert Strategy and Progress**

- **STRENGTHEN existing AMBER Alert system**
  - Launched a nationwide initiative to train Child Abduction Response Teams (CART) designed to assist local law enforcement agencies when they respond to incidents of missing and abducted children. CART can be used for all missing children's cases or can be deployed as part of an AMBER Alert.
  - Rolled out six new training programs for broadcasters, prosecutors, law enforcement about AMBER Alert.
  
- **EXPAND the scope of AMBER Alert**
  - Commemorated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Amber Hagerman's abduction on January 13, 2006 at a ceremony in Washington, DC and at events nationwide.
  - Joined NCMEC, the Wireless Association, and the Ad Council to launch a public awareness campaign about wireless AMBER Alerts
  - Joined the U.S. Postal Service in the unveiling and issuance of a social awareness AMBER Alert stamp.
  - Reached out to international law enforcement to establish AMBER Alert in other countries.
  
- **ENHANCE communication and coordination**
  - Conducted an increased number of regional summits and localized training specific to the needs of communities.
  - Launched internal AMBER Alert "extranet" to improve communications among state AMBER Alert coordinators
  - Developed a newsletter for AMBER Alert Coordinators to include information about technologies and success stories.
  - As part of the secondary distribution system, DOJ was involved in the launch of the AMBER Alert Highway Network which is a partnership among ATA, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Qualcomm Incorporated, to aid in the recovery of abducted children.

## **PLANS for 2006**

- Train law enforcement officers on the proper usage of the Child Abduction and AMBER Alert identifiers in entering information into the National Crime Information Center database, and work with the FBI to develop a "query" system which leads the data entry officer through the process.
- Develop an Online Training Program for AMBER Alert Call-Takers to improve their response to calls regarding a missing or abducted child.
- Work with U.S. border states and Mexico and Canada to address concerns and issues relating to child abductions that involve border crossings.
- Convene the 2006 National AMBER Alert Conference in July.
- Expand the reach of the wireless AMBER Alerts initiative.
- Work on addressing privacy issues and information sharing problems relative to the use of AMBER Alert in Indian Country.
- Recruit additional partners as secondary distribution groups for AMBER Alert.
- Develop guidelines for issuance of Endangered Child Alerts