

Ohio Amber Alert Steering Committee

www.ohioamberplan.org



Attorney General's Office–Missing Children Clearinghouse
Buckeye State Sheriff's Association
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Local/Regional AMBER Plan Representative
Ohio Association of Broadcasters

Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
Ohio Department of Transportation
Ohio Department of Public Safety – Ohio EMA
Ohio State Highway Patrol
State Emergency Communications Committee

Ted Strickland, Governor

Victims' Advocate

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMBER Alert Awareness Day – January 13, 2009

Columbus, OH – The Ohio AMBER Alert Plan is a critical missing child response program that uses the resources of law enforcement and media to notify the public when children have been abducted or kidnapped. Its goal is to promptly involve entire communities in the search and safe return of abducted children. Ohio AMBER Alert Plan began November, 2002 and was officially established by the Legislature in January, 2003. From 2002 to December 2008, Ohio has issued 105 AMBER Alerts which aided in the safe recovery of 125 children.

When an Ohio AMBER Alert is issued, law enforcement and media outlets implement the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to air the description of the missing child(ren) and suspected abductor. That information is broadcasted on local television and radio stations, Ohio Department of Transportation highway message boards and digital billboards.

Tuesday, January 13 is National AMBER Alert Awareness Day. The Missing Children Clearinghouse of the Ohio Attorney General's Office and the Ohio Amber Alert Steering Committee announces their participation with National AMBER Alert Awareness Day, and encourages the public's participation as well.

In recognition of National AMBER Alert Awareness Day, the Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee, in conjunction with basketball season, is initiating a program called "Time-Out for AMBER Alerts."

"We are requesting that all schools take a minute or less during basketball games to promote the wireless Amber Alert notification program" said Mark Patchen, chair of the Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee and division director of Ohio EMA's Technical Support, a division of the Ohio Department of Public Safety. "Technology now exists to specifically target zip code areas and send text messages to cellular devices when an AMBER Alert occurs. This target technology ensures the alert is focused on the area where we need everyone's help to locate the abducted child."

The Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee is constantly in search of new and improved ways to rapidly provide law enforcement information about an abducted child and of communicating AMBER Alerts to the greatest number of people when a child is abducted. Although the Emergency Alert System (EAS), faxes, teletypes, and highway sign boards do a good job in getting the mass message out, more can be done on an individual basis.

**Ohio Amber Alert Steering Committee – 2855 West Dublin–Granville Road
Columbus, Ohio 43235–2206**

Local schools are still being asked to participate in the National Missing Children's Day Poster Contest. Elementary school teachers are encouraged to help their students learn how to be safe and stay safe. The theme for the 2009 National Missing Children's Day Poster Contest is "Bring Our Missing Children Home." Holly Ritter of Hinckley, Ohio was the first place state winner of the 2008 National Missing Children's Day poster contest. Her poster is displayed on the Ohio Amber Alert website.

For the 2009 fact sheet, contest rules and applications, visit the Ohio's Amber Plan Web site at www.ohioamberplan.org/press.aspx.

Safety Tips for Parents and Children:

- Teach your children their full name, your full name, their address and telephone number.
- Know the routes your child takes to and from school and other activities.
- Participate in a neighborhood watch program.
- Before placing your child in a daycare, preschool, youth organization or at baby sitter, check references, certifications and qualifications. Ask the facility if it conducts pre-employment background checks.
- Teach your child what to do if approached by strangers. Common approaches include offering a ride, gifts or candy; asking the child to look for a lost pet; or claiming that the child's parents asked him or her to bring the child home. Have a code phrase that only you, your child and select family members know.
- Listen to your child. Do not disregard his or her fears.

For more information on Ohio AMBER Alert or Ohio Missing Children Clearinghouse, visit the following Web sites: www.ohioamberplan.org or www.ag.state.oh.us/victim/mcc.asp.

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