

*A Report to  
Governor Bob Taft*



# OHIO AMBER PLAN

Report and Recommendations of the  
Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce

November 8, 2002



*Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce*

*Lieutenant Governor Maureen O'Connor  
Co-Chair Person*

*Attorney General Betty Montgomery  
Co-Chair Person*



**BOB TAFT**  
GOVERNOR  
STATE OF OHIO

November 8, 2002

The Honorable Bob Taft  
Governor  
Statehouse  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Governor Taft:

When a child is abducted, law enforcement often needs the eyes and ears of the public to help find the missing child and catch those responsible. Realizing this, you established the Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce and named us as Co-Chairpersons. The Taskforce was charged with creating a statewide AMBER Alert System in Ohio, with implementation due no later than January 1, 2003.

The attached Report and Recommendations of the Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce sets specific guidelines concerning successful implementation and operation of a statewide AMBER Alert System. In accordance with Executive Order 2002-10T, the Taskforce met to develop recommendations for the most efficient, effective and responsive alert system to protect Ohio's children.

Thank you for entrusting us and the other members of the Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce to make these recommendations that will allow vital information to be sent across the state in the most critical first hours after an abduction.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Maureen O'Connor in black ink.

Maureen O'Connor  
Lieutenant Governor

Handwritten signature of Betty D. Montgomery in black ink.

Betty Montgomery  
Attorney General

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## I. HISTORY AND SUMMARY

When a child is abducted, law enforcement often needs the eyes and ears of the public to help find the missing child and catch those responsible. An abducted child's greatest enemy is time. The need to find these children is imminent. The Department of Justice reports that more than two-thirds of child abductions involve sexual assault and nearly 75% of children murdered by non-family members are killed within the first three hours and within 25 miles of the abduction. The original child abduction alert system was born out of such tragedy.

In 1996, nine-year-old Amber Hagerman was kidnapped and brutally murdered while riding her bicycle in a neighborhood in Arlington, Texas. The communities in Northern Texas mobilized in response to the tragedy by forging a partnership between local law-enforcement agencies and local broadcasters to implement an innovative early warning system to help find abducted children, named the AMBER Plan - America's **Missing Broadcast Emergency Response**. In 2001, the NCMEC launched the AMBER Plan nationwide. To date, the AMBER Plan has been credited with recovering 35 missing children since its inception. The AMBER Alert system works.

In Ohio, variations of the child abduction alert system are already operating in Greater Cincinnati, Central Ohio, Northeast Ohio and Stark, Tuscarawas, and Coshocton counties. Many other counties are close to being operational at this time. In addition, the Attorney General Office's Ohio Missing Children Clearinghouse assists in searching for missing children in a variety of proactive methods. However, a statewide AMBER Alert system will get out vital information across the state in the most critical first hours after abduction.

Demonstrating his commitment to creating a state where Ohio's children can live in safety and free from harm, Governor Bob Taft signed Executive Order 2002-10T on August 28, 2002, ordering the creation of a statewide AMBER Alert system in Ohio. This order created the Ohio AMBER Plan Taskforce to develop the statewide alert plan. The 24-member Taskforce, led by Ohio Lt. Gov. Maureen O'Connor and Ohio Attorney General Betty Montgomery, includes a wide variety of representatives from local, state, and federal law enforcement, emergency management personnel, broadcast and cable operators, state legislators, elected officials and victim advocates. This order also requires that the system be implemented no later than January 1, 2003.

In answering the Governor's charges, the experts on the Taskforce analyzed and discussed criteria to activate an AMBER Alert in response to a confirmed abduction, use of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) for radio and television broadcasts for effective communication locally, regionally and across the state, a roadside messaging system to disseminate information to Ohioans on interstates and highways and other steps to implement a statewide system.

The Ohio AMBER Plan Taskforce has recommended a comprehensive plan for a child abduction alert system that will provide early notification to law enforcement, the media and the community.

**The recommendations include:**

- Creating a minimum threshold criteria for statewide AMBER Alert activations;
- Effectively broadcasting information at all levels via radio and television using the Emergency Alert System;
- Communicating information with the public as they travel interstates and roadways by using a roadside messaging system;
- Disseminating photographs, images, and other relevant information to law enforcement agencies, stakeholders, and the public through the Law Enforcement Automated Data System;
- Creating an AMBER Alert website and continually updating it to provide for early notification;
- Providing a computer system that allows for immediate posting of vital information in highly accessed public areas;
- Providing for training for law enforcement agencies, broadcasters, and partners on how to implement the system;
- Partnering with government entities, the private sector and organizations to expansively disseminate information; and
- Creating an ongoing AMBER Alert Steering Committee to guide the continuous development and operation of the statewide plan.

In addressing these recommendations, the Taskforce members agreed that any statewide guidelines or protocols established must be coordinated with existing local AMBER alerts or similar plans.

## **II. MEMBERSHIP OF THE OHIO AMBER ALERT TASKFORCE**

The Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce was comprised of the following individuals:

Lt. Governor Maureen O'Connor – Co-Chairperson  
Office of the Lt. Governor

Attorney General Betty Montgomery – Co-Chairperson  
Office of the Attorney General

Sheriff Drew Alexander  
Summit County Sheriff's Office

Senator Daniel Brady  
Ohio Senate

Jennifer Carlson  
Chief of Staff, Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Robert Cornwell  
Executive Director, Buckeye State Sheriff's Association

Senator Kevin Coughlin  
Ohio Senate

Sgt. Brian Harding  
Akron Police Department

Chief Dwight Holcomb  
Upper Arlington Police Department

Representative Edward Jerse  
Ohio House of Representatives

Ed Kozelek  
Executive Vice President, Ohio Cable Telecommunications Association

Patty Levensgood  
Director, Tuscarawas County Emergency Management Agency

Chief Charles Lindsey  
Harrison Police Department

Linda Malloy  
Victim Advocate

Lt. Colonel Paul McClellan  
Ohio State Highway Patrol

Christine Merritt  
Executive Vice President, Ohio Association of Broadcasters

Mark Patchen  
Director of Technical Support, Ohio Emergency Management Agency

Terri Peaks  
Director, Ohio Missing Children Clearinghouse, Office of the Attorney General

Mike Rankin  
American Electric Power

Representative Linda Reidelbach  
Ohio House of Representatives

Wayne Rick  
Chief of Engineering, WVNO Radio

Harry Trombitas  
Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sgt. David Wolford  
City of Dayton Police Department

Howard Wood  
Information and Technology, Ohio Department of Transportation

### **III. MEETING SCHEDULE AND PROCESS**

From the time of the Governor's Executive Order to the first public meeting, the Lieutenant Governor and the Attorney General discussed the parameters, scope and limits of the Taskforce meetings for effective time management.

The first official meeting of the Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce was conducted on September 19, 2002. During this meeting, the Taskforce discussed the assets and operations that are currently available and in place to efficiently implement and support a statewide AMBER Plan. Following this meeting and throughout the Taskforce's duration, Taskforce members shared ideas and proposals via email, personal meetings and phone conversations. Working through the co-chairs and their respective staffs, the Taskforce members began to compile recommendations.

The second Taskforce meeting was held on October 25, 2002. During this meeting, Taskforce members reviewed the draft recommendations, offered substantiating evidence for the recommendations and finalized the overall approach of the Ohio AMBER Plan Taskforce recommendations for the Governor's consideration.

Throughout this process, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor coordinated with the Office of the Attorney General to produce and distribute meeting notes, coordinate meeting times and locations, and prepare the final report to meet the November 8, 2002 deadline established in the Governor's Executive Order.

#### **IV. CHARGES OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 2002-10T**

In developing the Ohio AMBER Plan to implement the AMBER Alert System, the Governor charged the Taskforce with considering the following factors:

- A. Law enforcement alert criteria for when the AMBER Alert System will be activated in response to a confirmed abduction.
- B. An Emergency Alert System for radio and television broadcasts for effective communication locally, regionally and statewide.
- C. A roadside messaging system to disseminate information to the public as they utilize the interstates and highways in Ohio.
- D. An image based system linking state, county and local law enforcement agencies; businesses; schools; hospitals; media outlets and other agencies to quickly disseminate photographs, images and other necessary information regarding the abduction.
- E. A computer based system where vital information can be posted quickly and accessed by law enforcement, media outlets and the general public.
- F. A mechanism for communication with and transmitting vital information to surrounding states' law enforcement agencies and media outlets for abductors that are believed to have taken their victim across state lines.
- G. Recommendations for providing all law enforcement with the necessary equipment and training to implement the Ohio AMBER Alert System.
- H. Recommendations on ways to partner with private companies and organizations to expand the disseminations of information.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASKFORCE**

### **A. Create a Statewide AMBER Alert Plan with Minimum Threshold Criteria for Statewide AMBER Alert activations.**

In discussing the minimum planning criteria that should be adopted to activate an AMBER Alert in multiple EAS operation areas or statewide, the Taskforce took into consideration several factors. Initially, the group examined the National AMBER Plan Guidelines, criteria adopted for use in other statewide AMBER Alert Plans, and criteria currently being utilized in existing AMBER Plans within the State of Ohio.

The Taskforce determined that the criteria should be well defined to lessen the likelihood of overuse or misuse of the system that would impede its effectiveness. The Taskforce also agreed that the criteria to activate an AMBER Alert in multiple EAS operation areas or statewide should be the minimum threshold requirements for activation of an alert and would not interfere with additional criteria that have been adopted by regional or local AMBER Plans within the state.

In keeping with the above-mentioned goals, the recommendation of criteria to activate an AMBER Alert in multiple EAS operation areas or statewide is as follows:

- 1.) The local investigating law enforcement agency confirms that an abduction has occurred.
- 2.) The child is under 18 years of age.
- 3.) The child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death.
- 4.) There should be enough descriptive information about the child, the suspect, and/or the circumstances surrounding the abduction to believe that activation of the alert will help to locate the child.
- 5.) The activation is not to be used for runaway children or family abductions unless the investigation determines that the child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death.
- 6.) Activation of an AMBER Alert in multiple EAS Operational Areas or statewide shall occur when the investigating law enforcement agency has information that indicates the abductor intends to or actually has moved the child out of the local area.

The Taskforce agreed that any additional criteria that may be adopted within a local or regional AMBER Plan is to be utilized only for an AMBER Alert activation within the immediate EAS operational area of the abduction. Existing law enforcement tools, such as LEADS, and traditional investigative techniques will be utilized in lieu of an AMBER Alert to notify entities outside of the immediate EAS operational area when the Ohio AMBER Alert criteria has not been met.

**B. Utilize the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to effectively broadcast AMBER Alert information locally, regionally, and statewide via radio and television:**

The Emergency Alert System (EAS), created in 1994 to replace the Emergency Broadcast System, is the oldest and most reliable means of relaying critical information to broadcasters quickly and simultaneously. Operated by the radio, television, and cable broadcasters, the EAS is used to transmit “life-saving messages” to the public concerning national, state, and local emergencies. EAS operates under regulations established by Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The FCC has recently adopted a special “Child Abduction Emergency” event code to be used within the Emergency Alert System (EAS) when the AMBER Plan is activated. The FCC has specifically designated this code to be used only in the most serious child abduction cases when a child’s life is believed to be in danger. The activation of the “Child Abduction Emergency” code signals listeners that important information regarding a child abduction is to follow. This unique sounding alert is broadcast on radio and television stations, followed by identifying information about the child, the abductor, and/or useful circumstances surrounding the event. Radio stations also interrupt programming to announce the Alert, and television stations and cable systems run a “crawl” on the screen along with identifying information.

The Emergency Alert System should be utilized within the Ohio AMBER Plan as follows:

1.) Creation of Local/Regional Plans

Each Ohio County should be encouraged to develop a process for the transmission of AMBER Alerts using the Emergency Alert System (EAS). This can be accomplished with the development of a county AMBER plan or by joining together in groups of counties to develop regional plans. To minimize confusion between local plans in different areas, counties are encouraged to use the activation criteria recommended by the Ohio AMBER Plan.

2.) Acquisition of Necessary EAS Equipment

The activation of the EAS requires that notifiers have EAS encoder equipment. To date, 61 Ohio counties have in place EAS activation

equipment. Notifiers for EAS activation at the local level are the county sheriff and county emergency management agency directors. Most counties with an EAS activation capability have that equipment located in the county sheriff's or countywide dispatch center. Some counties have EAS equipment located in the EMA office or county EOC. The EAS activation equipment exists at the state level at the Emergency Operations Center/Joint Dispatch Facility (EOC/JDF), managed by the Ohio Department of Public Safety.

The Buckeye State Sheriff's Association will work with the 27 Ohio counties that do not have EAS activation equipment to develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with neighboring counties that will ensure activation services are available in the event of an AMBER Alert.

3.) Routing of EAS Information

Local and/or Regional AMBER plans must address the routing of AMBER Alert information to the appropriate county EAS activation point. In many counties where EAS activation equipment does not exist, Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) have been developed for adjacent counties to accomplish EAS activation, for the county lacking the proper equipment.

4.) Activating the AMBER Alert for Within the Immediate EAS Operational Area

According to the Department of Justice (DOJ), a child abduction in which harm or death occurs is usually carried out within 25 miles of the abduction. Taking this into consideration, the initial EAS AMBER Alert activation should occur within the EAS operational area in which an abduction has taken place. (See Attachment "A"). The law enforcement agency investigating the abduction shall be responsible for determining if the criteria have been met to activate an AMBER Alert. Activation requests within a local or regional AMBER Plan area should be forwarded to the county sheriff who is designated as the activator within the Plan. Sheriff office staff should only serve to activate the EAS. The evaluation of criteria and decision as to declare an AMBER Alert will rest with the investigating law enforcement agency.

5.) Activating the AMBER Alert for Statewide or Multiple EAS Operational Areas

The investigating agency, through the course of their investigation, may determine that the abducted child has possibly been moved outside of the immediate EAS operational area, warranting multiple operational area or statewide activations of the EAS AMBER Alert. The Ohio Department of Public Safety shall be responsible for activating a multiple operational

area or statewide EAS AMBER Alert. To activate a multiple operational area or statewide EAS AMBER Alert, the investigating agency will contact the state Emergency Operations Center/Joint Dispatch Facility (EOC/JDF) and request that the EAS be activated. Staff at the EOC/JDF will only serve to activate the EAS. The evaluation of criteria and decision regarding activation of an AMBER Alert will rest with the investigating law enforcement agency.

6.) AMBER Alert Message Format

The activation of the EAS for an AMBER Alert will follow the already established EAS procedures as outlined in the State and 12 Local EAS Plans. The audio AMBER Alert message sent over the EAS will be formatted to contain the following beginning and ending statements:

**We interrupt this program to activate the Emergency Alert System for an AMBER Alert** (text of AMBER Alert message to contain available victim and suspect description, telephone number for the investigating agency and other important information. Total message length must be less than two minutes.) **This concludes this Emergency Alert System message.**

**NOTE:** The Ohio Emergency Management Agency (EMA) provides assistance to the county emergency management agencies and sheriffs on EAS equipment configuration and software programming. Counties without EAS equipment may contact Ohio EMA for assistance in establishing an EAS activation capability.

**C. Utilize a roadside messaging system to communicate with the public as they utilize the interstates and highways:**

As part of Ohio's overall traffic and traveler information systems, the Ohio Department of Transportation has permanent "message boards," known as dynamic message signs (DMS), installed in areas of the state. (See Attachment "C"). The DMS are used to notify motorists of traffic accidents, construction, weather emergencies, and other special events. The execution of an AMBER Alert message on these signs will not require any technical upgrades or have any other operational or financial implication. Most of the permanent DMS have remote control capability and are operated from regional traffic control centers or ODOT offices.

The Ohio Department of Transportation will coordinate with local law officials to activate message signs in concert with the EAS. Once the investigating law enforcement agency has activated the initial EAS AMBER Alert, the investigating agency may, according to the provisions of their AMBER Plan, notify the regional traffic control center within the EAS operational area in which the abduction has taken place, so that an appropriate message can be posted.

The state Emergency Operations Center/Joint Dispatch Facility (EOC/JDF) shall be responsible for triggering statewide dynamic messaging once a multiple operational area or statewide AMBER Alert has been activated.

**D. Utilize and upgrade the Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS) to quickly disseminate photographs, images, and other relevant information regarding an abduction to state, county and local law enforcement agencies, identified stakeholders, and the general public:**

The Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS) has been in service since 1968. LEADS is used to access information on vehicle and driver registrations as well as critical information about wanted persons, missing persons, and stolen vehicles. LEADS provides for the exchange of criminal justice and vehicle information with other states through the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS). LEADS is directly accessed by over 680 criminal justice agencies within Ohio and thousands more indirectly through regional crime information systems.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol will utilize LEADS to notify all law enforcement agencies of an abducted child, including those incidents for which an AMBER Alert is activated. The Patrol's plan is to alter LEADS to accept AMBER Alerts by modifying an existing capability called "Caution Ohio Police" or COP File. The COP file has been used in the past to notify law enforcement when a dangerous person is at large that represents a danger to the public or law enforcement. This modification will allow for new fields that are AMBER Alert specific and create a color-coded alert screen at every law enforcement agency across the state that has been designated as such. The system could then send a message to all law enforcement agencies, both in-state, in adjacent states, and in special cases, out-of-state, advising them of the child abduction.

Within Ohio, LEADS serves as the gateway to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), which provides information about wanted persons, missing persons, and stolen vehicles on a national level, as well as other information of interest to law enforcement. An upgrade to NCIC, known as NCIC 2000, will be completed in July of 2003. NCIC 2000 is a federally mandated computer upgrade of the law enforcement computer network in all states. The NCIC 2000 upgrade allows for the storage and retrieval of images, photographs, and other related data in the NCIC 2000 database. The current version of leads is text-based only and does not accommodate such images.

This new system will be a Microsoft Windows compatible program that is accessible through a web browser, allowing users to drag, paste, and copy information from many sources to the NCIC system, including digital images. The web-enabled technology will facilitate the ability to access the system through the Internet after sufficient security mechanisms are in place. The Ohio

State Highway Patrol is in the process of upgrading their equipment now, with a scheduled completion date of July of 2003. With the activation of NCIC 2000, the Ohio State Highway Patrol will place new equipment with these capabilities in all LEADS user agencies, which includes approximately 680 Ohio agencies.

The AMBER Alert functionality can be easily integrated into the new LEADS because of its graphical nature and open architecture. Screens can be created that will allow an operator to enter an AMBER Alert and attach graphical images to be dispersed to a predetermined list of authorized users.

In addition, the Ohio State Highway Patrol has submitted a federal grant application to the Office of Criminal Justice Services in an attempt to secure funding to create the necessary security infrastructure to allow Internet access to LEADS via a Virtual Private Network (VPN). If OSHP is successful in securing the federal funding, the VPN could provide non-law enforcement agencies with access to AMBER Alert information on the Internet.

**E. Create an AMBER Alert website to quickly post vital information that is accessible to law enforcement, media outlets and the general public:**

The Ohio AMBER Plan will utilize the Ohio Missing Children Clearinghouse (OMCC) website to post vital information concerning a child abduction. Currently, missing children posters that include descriptions and pictures are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for viewing on the OMCC website, but are only updated during normal business hours. The Attorney General's Office will alter this system to allow updates to the website on an immediate basis. The goal date for completion of this change and the posting of information on an immediate basis is the end of calendar year 2002.

After law enforcement activates an AMBER Alert, they may use one of the following methods to have the information posted to the AMBER Alert Website: 1) If the agency has a LOCATER system (as described in the next section), the agency can use the system's AMBER Plan poster template (created by the OMCC) to develop a poster and forward it to the AMBER Plan website; or 2) If the agency does not have a LOCATER system, it can digitally send an image to the Attorney General's Office and staff will create a poster from the given information. The poster will then be placed on the website and can be accessed by law enforcement, media, schools, businesses, hospitals, and the public. If no picture is available, text can also be placed on the website when provided to the OMCC.

The Ohio Missing Children Clearinghouse website will also provide links to local Ohio AMBER Plan sites and the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children. Use of this website will not preclude a law enforcement agency from distributing photos to local media and other sources as part of a normal investigation under their current operating procedures.

**F. Provide a computer system that allows state, county and local law enforcement agencies, businesses, schools, hospitals, media outlets and other agencies to quickly post vital information in highly accessed public areas:**

The Ohio Missing Children Clearinghouse (OMCC) currently has a computer system and software, known as the LOCATER system, that creates posters of missing children, photos of vehicles or clothing, and reward posters. It could be used as a template for AMBER alert posters and more. The LOCATER system can also be used to broadcast fax information to private businesses. Posting of AMBER Alert posters will be coordinated with the OMCC website mentioned above. There is a possible cost associated with the broadcast fax capability.

OMCC can send an e-mail alert (text and images) to law enforcement and other agencies, businesses, hospitals, media outlets and citizens who voluntarily sign up on the web page to receive them. America Online (AOL) and other Internet service providers may also be utilized to provide this information to their users as well. This system will be open to the general public.

There are currently 36 LOCATOR systems either installed or requested in Ohio. The OMCC should work with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to provide local law enforcement agencies with a LOCATOR computer system and software. The LOCATOR system includes a computer, monitor, scanner and color printer and is provided by the NCMEC at no charge to the receiving agency.

The OMCC representative shall report to the AMBER Alert Steering Committee regarding any progress made in obtaining LOCATOR systems for Ohio agencies.

**G. Ensure that sufficient training is available to implement the Ohio AMBER Alert System:**

The Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce recognized the need to ensure that appropriate training on the Ohio AMBER Plan is available to all involved parties, including law enforcement, victim advocates, broadcasters, and the community.

- 1.) Currently, procedures on the activation of the EAS are in place at county EMA and sheriff offices that have EAS equipment. These procedures outline the process to be followed in the activation of the EAS for any emergency situation. Training on the use of EAS equipment is conducted by the Ohio Emergency Management Agency and EAS local primary station broadcast personnel. Training on the use of the EAS system should also be provided to those agencies that acquire EAS equipment for the first time.

- 2.) LEADS users will be trained by their agency terminal agency coordinators (TAC). These are existing positions that are responsible for training their agency users on new and existing LEADS programs. They have an on-going training program already in place.
- 3.) The Taskforce members identified the need to ensure that local law enforcement is well trained regarding the criteria used to determine if an AMBER Alert should be issued and the technical requirements to implement an Alert. The Office of Criminal Justice Services should attempt to secure federal grant monies to fund law enforcement training on the Ohio AMBER Alert System at the local level.
- 4.) Concurrently, the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission should expand the peace officer training curriculum to include AMBER Alert system training. The Ohio Attorney General's Office will develop a proposal for law enforcement training and provide the plan to the Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee for consideration and implementation.
- 5.) The Ohio Association of Broadcasters and the Ohio Cable Telecommunications Association will develop a proposal for media training and provide the plan to the Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee for consideration and implementation.
- 6.) The Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee will identify the appropriate entity to develop training on the Ohio AMBER Plan for victim advocacy groups.
- 7.) The Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee will work to develop public service announcements and brochures to build community awareness of the Ohio AMBER Plan. The Steering Committee will utilize public-private partnerships to work towards this end.

**H. Partner with government entities, private companies and organizations to expand the dissemination of information:**

The Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee shall explore ways in which Ohio can partner with government entities, private companies and organizations to expand the dissemination of information related to an AMBER Alert, including the following:

- 1.) The Ohio Lottery Commission has approximately 7,000 lottery terminals across the state. Many of these terminals are in locations where AMBER information could reach the motoring or general public.

In the event of an AMBER Alert, the Ohio Lottery Commission will immediately send information to all lottery terminals in the AMBER Alert

area. The lottery AMBER Alert areas will be configured to match the Emergency Alert System (EAS) Operational Areas as outlined in Attachment "A". AMBER Alert messages sent over lottery terminals will be repeated every half-hour for the first three hours.

The current Ohio Lottery system is text based only and does not provide the capability for the transmission of images. The Ohio Lottery system is also off-line from 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. daily. AMBER Alerts received during these hours will be immediately transmitted upon the 6:00 a.m. restoration of lottery terminal services.

Requests for the dissemination of information over lottery terminals will be made by the investigating law enforcement agency according to provisions of their AMBER Plan. Once the investigating law enforcement agency has activated the initial AMBER Alert, the investigating agency may notify the lottery terminal operations center and request the transmission of the AMBER Alert throughout the immediate operational area.

The state Emergency Operations Center (EOC) shall be responsible for triggering multiple operational area or statewide alerts.

- 2.) The Steering Committee shall consider working with Wal-Mart and other stores which are already National Center For Missing and Exploited Children poster partners and Code Adam sponsors.
- 3.) The Steering Committee may also want to consider alerting organizations such as A Child Is Missing, an organization that sends 1,000 automated messages to residences and business near the abduction location. Messages include a description of the missing child and requests that people look around and report any information to local police. The program is currently in Hamilton County and wants to expand throughout Ohio. Similar programs may also be in place and may be identified at a later date.
- 4.) The Steering Committee should also work with existing local child abduction programs to identify partnerships already in place and ideas for expansion.

#### **I. Creation of an ongoing Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee:**

The statewide Ohio AMBER Alert System will reflect a unique partnership between local, state, and federal law enforcement, emergency management personnel, community activists, private sector representation, and local broadcasters. As such, it will be vital to the success of the alert system to create a strong working team charged with oversight of the Ohio AMBER Plan. The

Taskforce recommends the creation of the Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee for this express purpose.

The Taskforce shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The Taskforce shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- 1.) Governor's designee who serves as chairperson;
- 2.) Representative from the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Ohio Emergency Management Agency;
- 3.) Representative from the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Ohio State Highway Patrol;
- 4.) Representative from the Attorney General's Office – Missing Children Clearinghouse;
- 5.) Representative from the State Emergency Communications Committee;
- 6.) Representative from the Federal Bureau of Investigation;
- 7.) Representative from the Buckeye State Sheriff's Association;
- 8.) Representative from the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police;
- 9.) A broadcast industry designee;
- 10.) A victim or victim's advocate;
- 11.) Representative from a local or regional AMBER plan;
- 12.) Representative(s) of any other agency or organization as deemed appropriate by the Governor.

Responsibilities of the Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee may include:

- 1.) Oversight of the plan's operation and effectiveness;
- 2.) Development and distribution of written procedures and contact information necessary to activate an AMBER Alert;
- 3.) Ensuring that AMBER Alerts are distributed in a timely fashion;
- 4.) Meeting periodically to review and evaluate the plan's procedures and revise it when appropriate;

- 5.) Conducting after action reviews of local, multiple operational area and statewide AMBER Alert activations immediately following the incident;
- 6.) Reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the EAS as it relates to AMBER Alerts;
- 7.) Developing training for law enforcement agencies, victim advocates, and broadcast representatives on the AMBER Alert criteria and process for activation;
- 8.) Creating public service announcements and a brochure on the Ohio AMBER Alert System to be utilized in educating the community;
- 9.) Coordinating with community representatives in the development of additional local and regional child abduction alert systems within the state.
- 10.) Maintaining a list of all participating agencies, broadcasters, cable operators, and community partners;
- 11.) Sharing the plan with adjacent states and developing Memorandums of Understanding regarding the activation of AMBER Alerts when the law enforcement investigation indicates that the abducted child may have been transported across state lines;
- 12.) Chronicling the successes and shortcomings of the plan and providing relevant data to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children so it can serve as a national clearinghouse of AMBER Plan information;
- 13.) Considering ways in which the Ohio AMBER Plan may partner with private companies and organizations to expand the dissemination of information.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce has developed the framework for a comprehensive statewide child abduction alert system. Based on the proven methods and lessons learned in the National AMBER Alert System, the Ohio AMBER Plan uses existing resources to create a vital response system that will serve as a tool for law enforcement in rescuing an abducted child in imminent danger

Cooperation and flexibility will allow this system to succeed. Experience shows that a child abduction alert system is most effective when law enforcement, the media and residents in the community in which a child abduction occurs establish a strong partnership. Further, based on the common goal of recovering an abducted child, a primary consideration of the Taskforce was the desire to build on, rather than to replace, local and regional plans.

Accordingly, the Ohio AMBER Alert Taskforce recognized the value of the lessons learned by those who have already been involved in building existing local and regional AMBER Plans within Ohio. The system can be more effective and efficient by doing what already works.

Consistent with this goal, the Taskforce recommends guidance in developing additional local and regional child abduction alert systems throughout the state. Once a local or regional plan is established, the recommendations provide a coordinated approach to ensuring the early activation of child abduction alert systems throughout Ohio and the means to activate a statewide AMBER Alert when necessary.

The Taskforce recommendations follow a decentralized strategy allowing local control over implementation while recognizing the need to maintain the effectiveness of the statewide system. This is the balance needed to ensure the alert system is used appropriately and not overused. Early warnings must be accurate and warranted for the plan's integrity and credibility to remain intact. Overuse or misuse of the alert system will cause citizens to become desensitized to urgent messages and will diminish the effectiveness of the AMBER Plan.

The Ohio AMBER Plan Taskforce has assembled an AMBER plan consistent with the Governor's Executive Order. The plan establishes criteria for alert activation, an emergency alert system for effectively targeted radio and television broadcasts, a roadside messaging system to disseminate information to Ohioans on roadways, and other proven steps to implement a statewide AMBER system. If this plan must be used in the unfortunate event of a child abduction, Ohioans will know that local, regional, and state entities are actively engaged in recovering that child.

# Ohio

## EAS Operational Areas





## LOCATION OF DYNAMIC MESSAGE SIGNS (DMS) IN OHIO

**Cincinnati Area:** There are 33 message signs in the Cincinnati area of Ohio and 11 in northern Kentucky, operated jointly by the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.

**Columbus Area:** There are four message signs in Columbus, with plans for 12 additional signs in 2003 – 2004.

**Akron Area:** There are approximately nine message signs in and around Akron, operated by ODOT's district office. The other message signs can be programmed in the field.

**Sandusky Bay/SR. 2:** There are two message signs in the geographic area that are being upgraded this year. These signs were originally used to alert motorists of fog or other inclement weather on the Edison Bridge.