

Public Alerts

317.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for alerting the public to important information and soliciting public aid when appropriate.

317.2 POLICY

Public alerts may be employed using the Emergency Alert System (EAS), local radio, television and press organizations and other groups to notify the public of incidents, or enlist the aid of the public, when the exchange of information may enhance the safety of the community. Various types of alerts may be available based upon each situation and the alert system's individual criteria.

317.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

317.3.1 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the Missoula Police Department should notify their supervisors, Shift Commander or Detective Division supervisor as soon as practicable upon learning of a situation where public notification, a warning or enlisting the help of the media and the public could assist in locating a missing person, apprehending a dangerous person or gathering information.

317.3.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A supervisor apprised of the need for a public alert is responsible for making the appropriate notifications based upon the circumstances of each situation. The supervisor shall promptly notify the appropriate Staff Officer and the Public Information Officer (PIO) when any alert is generated.

The supervisor in charge of the investigation to which the alert relates is responsible for:

- (a) Updating alerts.
- (b) Canceling alerts.
- (c) Ensuring all appropriate reports are completed.

317.4 AMBER ALERTS™

AMBER Alerts™ are used to provide a statewide system for the rapid dissemination of information regarding abducted children.

317.4.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are required for activation:

- (a) A child is missing and is 17 years of age or younger or has a proven physical or mental disability.
- (b) Law enforcement reasonably believes a child has been abducted or has disappeared under suspicious circumstances.
- (c) Law enforcement believes the child is in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury.

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- (d) Information exists that could assist the public in the safe recovery of the missing child.

317.4.2 PROCEDURE

The following is the procedure for initiating an AMBER Alert:

- (a) The supervisor in charge will ensure that contact is made with the Montana Department of Justice (DOJ) Help Desk.
- (b) The supervisor in charge or the authorized designee will enter the child into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) using the appropriate message key (Child Abduction flag).
- (c) The supervisor in charge or the authorized designee will ensure Dispatch is prepared for a potential increase in call volume.
- (d) The supervisor in charge or the authorized designee will ensure the PIO is prepared to utilize what may be a significant media response.

317.5 MISSING AND ENDANGERED PERSON ALERT

Missing and Endangered Person Alerts (MEPA) are used to provide a statewide system for the rapid dissemination of information regarding a missing person when circumstances fail to meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert but the Department determines a public alert may still be helpful.

317.5.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria should be considered for issuance of a MEPA:

- (a) Circumstances do not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert.
- (b) The missing individual is missing under unexplained, involuntary or suspicious circumstances.
- (c) The missing individual is believed to be in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, or environmental or weather conditions; is believed to be in the company of a potentially dangerous person; or is believed to be put in peril due to some other factor.
- (d) Information exists that could assist the public in the safe recovery of the missing person.

317.5.2 PROCEDURE

The following is the procedure for initiating a MEPA:

- (a) The supervisor in charge will ensure that contact is made with the Montana DOJ Help Desk.
- (b) The supervisor in charge or the authorized designee will enter the person into NCIC using the appropriate message key (Missing, Endangered or Involuntary).
- (c) The supervisor in charge or the authorized designee will ensure Dispatch is prepared for a potential increase in call volume.
- (d) The supervisor in charge or the authorized designee will ensure the PIO is prepared to utilize what may be a significant media response.

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The Department may use the missing person locator system to create a MEPA poster or may request the Montana DOJ assist with the same.

317.6 BLUE ALERTS

Blue Alerts are used to provide a statewide system for the rapid dissemination of information regarding a violent criminal who has seriously injured or killed a local, state or federal law enforcement officer. Blue Alerts may also be used if a peace officer is missing in connection with his/her official duties, or if there is an imminent and credible threat that an individual intends to seriously injure or kill a peace officer (§ 44-2-801, MCA).

317.6.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are utilized to determine if a Blue Alert should be issued in any of the following situations (§ 44-2-801, MCA):

- (a) A peace officer has been seriously injured or killed in the line of duty and all of the following apply:
 - 1. An individual suspected to have caused the injury or death is at large.
 - 2. The individual poses a serious threat to the public, to other peace officers or both, as determined by a law enforcement agency.
 - 3. Sufficient information exists such that the issuance of a Blue Alert would materially assist in the capture of the individual.
- (b) A peace officer is missing in connection with official duties.
- (c) An imminent and credible threat exists that an individual intends to cause serious injury to or death of a peace officer.

317.6.2 PROCEDURE

The following is the procedure for initiating a Blue Alert:

- (a) The supervisor in charge will ensure that contact is made with the Montana DOJ Help Desk.
- (b) The supervisor in charge or the authorized designee will ensure Dispatch is prepared for a potential increase in call volume.
- (c) The supervisor in charge or the authorized designee will ensure the PIO is prepared to utilize what may be a significant media response.