

	LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT Ardmore, Pennsylvania	
	Policy 3.9.3	
Subject:		Distribution:
Missing Person/Amber Alert		All Personnel
Date of Issue:	Expiration Date:	Rescinds:
01-07-2019	Until Amended or Rescinded	Policy 3.9.3 (06-01-2014)
References:		
CALEA: 41.2.5, 41.2.6; PLEAC: 4.3.1		
By Authority of:		
		Superintendent of Police

PURPOSE

To establish Department guidelines for the investigation of missing and unidentified persons and the recording of appropriate entries into NCIC/CLEAN, in order to comply with PA. CC. § 2908 responsibilities, regarding missing children, Amber Alert and other applicable laws.

POLICY (CALEA 41.2.6 a)

The NCIC/CLEAN communications network provides information files that assist in the locating of abducted/missing persons. The effectiveness of the system depends on the accurate and prompt entry of missing person's information, as well as, the immediate cancellation of entries when the person has returned or is located. **(CALEA 41.2.5 c) (PLEAC 4.3.1e)**

Each officer is responsible for immediately and thoroughly investigating all reports of abducted/missing persons and unidentified persons regardless of age, place of residence or circumstance, and promptly requesting that Communications Center personnel make the appropriate NCIC/CLEAN entries. **(CALEA 41.2.5 b) (PLEAC 4.3.1 a, c)**

Communications Center personnel are responsible for making the actual entries into NCIC/CLEAN and for ensuring that the entry contains accurate and complete information. It is imperative that both investigating officers and Communications Center personnel avoid any unnecessary delays in making these entries. **(CALEA 41.2.5 c)**

DEFINITIONS

Amber Alert – The Amber Alert program is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement agencies, broadcasters, transportation agencies, and the wireless industry, to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child-abduction cases.

Pennsylvania's Missing Endangered Person Advisory System (MEPAS) – A method of alerting citizens that a person is missing who does not meet the criteria for an Amber Alert but is at special risk of harm or injury. An alert is sent to local media for distribution to the public, and also to local law enforcement, to assist in locating the missing person.

PROCEDURE (CALEA 41.2.6 e)

A. General

1. Officers receiving an abducted/missing person report shall collect and evaluate information (pictures, descriptions, etc.), and investigate all possible leads without delay, recording in reports all relevant information and circumstances. **(CALEA 41.2.5 a) (PLEAC 4.3.1 a)**
2. A supervisor shall be immediately notified in all instances of an abducted/missing person and shall be responsible for the coordination of the initial investigation and notifications of the Watch Commander and Investigations Unit. If required, the supervisor shall also coordinate the activation of an Amber Alert or MEPAS. **(CALEA 41.2.6 b)**
3. Officers must be aware that there is no formal waiting period required before the Department will accept a missing person report for a juvenile or adult. **(PLEAC 4.3.1 f)**
4. Upon obtaining the minimum mandatory data for NCIC/CLEAN entry, any missing person under 21 years of age shall be immediately entered into NCIC. Communications Center personnel shall ensure that the CAD notes reflect the timeline involving the assigned officer obtaining the minimum mandatory data for the entry. There is a two-hour reporting (entry) requirement upon receipt of this information. **(PLEAC 4.3.1 f)**
5. The investigating officer must advise the Communications Center how the missing person is to be entered into NCIC/CLEAN. It is the investigating officer's responsibility to assign one of the below categories to the NCIC Entry/Missing Person report.

Officers and Communications Center personnel should also be aware that when entering a missing person with the "caution" field attached, the "MIS" field must be filled out with the reason for the caution. Reasons include but are not limited to; need for medicines, violent behavior, disability needs, suicidal tendencies, drug use, etc.

a. The following is a list of applicable categories:

1. Catastrophe victim
2. Disability
3. Endangered
4. Involuntary

- a. Enter Missing Person - Involuntary (EMI)
 - b. Enter Missing Person - Involuntary Caution (EMIC)
 5. Juvenile
 - b. All Missing Person Reports filed by this Department must include:
(PLEAC 4.3.1 b)
 1. Lower Merion Police Department Missing Person Checklist Form ([AUX-34](#)), and;
 2. If the missing person is 21 years of age or older, the Lower Merion Police Department Missing Person Declaration Form ([AUX-22](#)) shall be completed.
 6. It is the responsibility of the investigating officer to ensure that all associated checklists and forms are completed and submitted with the investigative file.
 7. All missing persons shall remain listed in NCIC until located. Once it is verified that the missing person has been located, the assigned investigating officer shall send the NCIC cancellation and supplement the initial report.
 8. Upon a person being missing for 60 days, a follow up with the reporting party is required and shall be conducted every 60 days thereafter until the person is located. A member of the Investigations Unit shall conduct the follow up in an attempt to obtain identifying factors which shall include such things as blood type, dental characteristics, fingerprint classification, jewelry type, scars, tattoos etc. A supplementary report will document all follow ups and searches regardless if any additional information is obtained. Any relevant additional information shall then be promptly entered into NCIC.
(CALEA 41.2.5 d, e, f, 41.2.6 f)
- B. Missing Juveniles** - The investigating officer shall immediately establish the fact that the youth is missing.
1. Officers should begin their investigation by first searching the residence regardless of any prior search by family members or other occupants. Do not assume that the search was thorough (Reassure parents that the police are not questioning their capabilities, but only using sound procedures and that past experience has shown that many children are located in unusual locations in their own home).
 2. The juvenile's friends should be contacted, local park/playgrounds checked, and when in session, the juvenile's school should be checked.
 3. In addition to the NCIC entry, the following agencies shall be contacted by phone or by fax. Officers shall use the Missing Juvenile Reporting Form ([AUX-35](#)) when faxing/emailing information to the below agencies. They shall be notified within twenty-four (24) hours: **(CALEA 41.2.6 c)**

- a) National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: 1-800-843-5678 Fax: 703-274-2200. The NCIC entry only carries over to this center when the missing person qualifies as an Amber Alert victim.
- b) Lower Merion School Superintendent: FAX: 610-645-0703 or other school of attendance.
- c) PA Bureau of Vital Statistics: 1-724-656-3100; FAX- 1-724-656-3224 (if the person was born in Pennsylvania; otherwise, contact the Department of Vital Statistics in the state in which they were born).

The investigating officer making the above notifications shall keep the fax receipt and Missing Juvenile Reporting Form as proof of notification and turn them in with the investigative file. Also, if making phone contact with an employee at one of the agencies, the name of the person contacted and the time of the contact shall be noted in the investigative report.

C. Abducted Juveniles and Amber Alert

1. Officers receiving a report of an abducted child shall quickly collect and evaluate the information to determine if the incident meets the criteria for an Amber Alert. Those criteria are as follows: **(CALEA 41.2.6 d)**
 - a. The abducted child must be under 18 years of age;
 - b. The abducted child is believed to be in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury;
 - c. Additional factors are considered in the decision-making process as to whether or not to activate an Amber Alert. These factors include, but are not limited to, availability of descriptive information which could assist in the recovery of the child, time elapsed since the child was last seen, and reliability of witness(es).
2. If the criteria are met for the activation of an Amber Alert, the information will be forwarded to Communications Center personnel who will immediately contact the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) Consolidated Dispatch Center in Harrisburg at 877-777-9975. They will provide a brief synopsis of the incident. A request can be sent through the CLEAN/NCIC terminal but a telephone call to the above number should immediately follow the entry.
3. PSP will evaluate the message. A representative of the PSP Bureau of Criminal Investigations may require further information concerning the need to initiate an Amber Alert. If all criteria are met, Amber Alert is initiated and PSP compiles an informational message for broadcast. PSP will facilitate the broadcast of a message regionally on the Emergency Alert System via all radio, TV and cable stations. In addition, a regional CLEAN message is disseminated to all law enforcement agencies by PSP.

4. Amber Alert utilizes a website that includes the name of the victim, all pertinent information and when possible, a photo of the victim. The investigating officer should obtain a recent photo to forward to PSP for inclusion on the website. All cancellations of an Amber Alert will be posted on the website. The photo will need to be converted to an electronic format and forwarded to the local PSP/ Amber Alert investigator. The website is <http://www.amber.state.pa.us>.
5. It is the investigating officer's responsibility to assign a category to the NCIC Entry/Missing Person report that is either, Enter Missing Person-Involuntary (EMI), or Enter Missing Person-Involuntary Caution (EMIC).

D. Pennsylvania's Missing Endangered Person Advisory System (MEPAS)

6. MEPAS criteria will include:
 - a. The incident circumstances do not meet the criteria for an Amber Alert, and
 - b. The person is missing under unexplained, involuntary, or suspicious circumstances, or
 - c. The person is believed to be in danger of serious bodily injury or death because of age, health, mental or physical disability, environment or weather conditions, and
 - d. There is sufficient information that, if distributed to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the missing endangered person.
2. Requesting a MEPAS – any police department in Pennsylvania may request a MEPAS alert for a missing person case they are investigating. The investigating agency will contact the PSP Watch Center by telephone at 877-777-9975 and request the alert. The investigating agency will be required to provide detailed incident information and verify that the incident meets the criteria for issuance. The PSP Watch Center and the PA Criminal Intelligence Center (PaCIC) will issue the alert based on the information submitted. The investigating agency will contact the PSP Watch Center immediately upon case resolution to cancel the alert.

E. LoJack Safety Net – Persons at risk of wandering may be members of this private locator service. If the missing person is identified as a client of LoJack® SafetyNet™, refer to [Policy 3.19.2, LoJack Safety Net Program](#).

F. Unidentified Persons

1. Each officer is responsible for promptly requesting that the Communications Center personnel make the appropriate NCIC/CLEAN entries upon:
 - a. Taking into custody an unidentified person/child. **(PLEAC 4.3.1 di)**

- b. Discovering an unidentified deceased person/child. (*PLEAC 4.3.1 dii*)

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all supervisory personnel to ensure that all personnel under their immediate supervision comply with this policy.