

WHAT IS THE AMBER ALERT PROGRAM?

The AMBER Plan is a voluntary partnership between law-enforcement agencies and broadcasters to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child-abduction cases. The Town of Cheverly participates in this Plan.

Broadcasters use the Emergency Alert System (EAS), formerly called the Emergency Broadcast System, to air a description of the abducted child and suspected abductor.

This is the same concept used during severe weather emergencies. The goal of the AMBER Alert is to instantly galvanize the entire community to assist in the search for and safe return of the child.

WHEN AND WHY WAS THE AMBER PLAN CREATED?

The AMBER Plan was created in 1996 as a powerful legacy to 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, a bright little girl who was kidnapped and brutally murdered while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas.

The tragedy shocked and outraged the entire community. Residents contacted radio stations in the Dallas area and suggested they broadcast special "alerts" over the airwaves so they could help prevent such incidents in the future.

In response to the community's concern for the safety of local children, the Dallas/Fort Worth Association of Radio Managers teamed up with local law-enforcement agencies in northern Texas and developed this innovative early warning system to help find abducted children. Statistics show that, when abducted, a child's greatest enemy is time.

HOW DOES THE PLAN WORK?

Once law enforcement has been notified about an abducted child, they determine whether the case meets the AMBER Plan's criteria for triggering an alert.

Each program establishes its own AMBER Plan criteria; however, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children suggests criteria that should be met before an Alert is activated, and Cheverly adheres to these criteria.

- Law enforcement confirms that a child has been abducted
- The abduction involves the taking of a child that is 17 years of age or younger, or is a dependent person that has a proven physical or mental disability*
- Law enforcement believes the circumstances surrounding the abduction indicate that the child/person is in danger of serious bodily harm or death
- There is enough descriptive information about the child, abductor, and/or suspect's vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help

*** DO NOT use the Amber Alert for locating children who have runaway from home, missing children taken by a non-custodial relative in a child custody case, lost children, or incidents when a law enforcement search is underway for a criminal suspect, i.e., murder, bank robber, rapist, and in which a child is involved.**

The primary stations send the same information to area radio and television stations and cable systems via the EAS, and it is immediately broadcast by participating stations to millions of listeners.

Some areas in Maryland are also incorporating electronic highway billboards in their Plans. The billboards, typically used to disseminate traffic information to drivers, now alert the public of abducted children, displaying pertinent information about the child, abductor or suspected vehicle that drivers might look for on highways.

HOW LONG DOES THE AMBER ALERT LAST?

When the effectiveness of the Amber Alert is deemed to have expired, the EAS will be deactivated with a message informing the public that any information should be directed to their local law enforcement agency. Usually an Amber Alert is not in effect for more than 24 hours.

WHAT TO DO WHEN AN AMBER ALERT IS ENACTED

The AMBER Alert message encourages the public to look for the missing child or suspect. You become the ears and eyes of local law enforcement.

In the event that you spot a child, adult, or vehicle fitting the AMBER Alert description, immediately call 911 or the telephone number given in the AMBER Alert and provide authorities with as much information as you know.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

If you have questions or comments, or need information from the Cheverly Police Department please call the Department's administrative telephone number at 301-773-8362.