

Media Fact Sheet: **AMBER Alert**



The AMBER Alert program is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement agencies and media broadcasters to send out emergency alerts to the public when a child has been abducted and it is believed that the child's life is in imminent danger. The program provides the public with immediate and up-to-date information about a child abduction via widespread media broadcasts, including television and radio, and solicits the public's help in assisting in the safe and swift return of an abducted

child. Each province in Canada has an AMBER Alert program, issuing alerts within their specific regions.

An AMBER Alert can only be activated by police agencies, and is only issued for the most serious, time-sensitive cases.

What is an AMBER Alert?

An AMBER Alert is a warning system designed to quickly alert the public of an abducted child believed to be in imminent danger. When an AMBER Alert is issued, radio and television stations **immediately** interrupt programming to broadcast information about the abducted child, the alleged abductor and any vehicle description available. The AMBER Alert program immediately engages the local community in the search for the child and their abductor.

Why an AMBER Alert?

Research has shown that if an abducted child is going to be harmed, it usually occurs within a short time period.¹ The AMBER Alert program helps expedite the recovery of an abducted child and benefits communities by:

- Making the community aware of the urgency of the situation.
- Mobilizing the community to assist in the recovery of an abducted child and in apprehending the abductor.
- Giving law enforcement a powerful tool to assist in the location of an abducted child and giving media broadcasters a way to help their community by issuing alerts.
- Increasing law enforcement's ability to locate witnesses and help resolve child abduction cases quickly due to extensive radio and television coverage.

In Canada, AMBER Alert programs are provincially operated. While most provinces have AMBER Alert committees, only law enforcement can issue an AMBER Alert.

¹ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, "What hours are most critical when trying to locate a missing child?" http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=2816#2



Criteria Needed to Issue an AMBER Alert

Law enforcement will issue an AMBER Alert only in the most dangerous child abduction cases when time is of the essence. Each province has its own criteria to determine whether or not an AMBER Alert should be issued to help recover an abducted child.

AMBER Alerts are issued only when specific criteria are met. These types of alerts are rarely issued, and police decide on a case-by-case basis whether issuing an AMBER Alert would assist in the recovery of an abducted child.

While criteria for issuing an AMBER Alert may vary from province to province, basic requirements include:

- The child is under the age of 18
- There is a belief that the child has been abducted
- There is a belief that the child is in imminent danger
- There is information to be released that may help locate the child and/or the abductor (e.g. description of the child, the suspect or the vehicle driven by the abductor)

An AMBER Alert must also be issued within a reasonable amount of time from the moment of the abduction. In some provinces, AMBER Alerts may also be issued for vulnerable adults who have gone missing (e.g. elderly adults, or adults living with an intellectual disability).