



GREENVILLE COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

GO - 239

GENERAL ORDERS

MISSING PERSONS / AMBER ALERT / ACIM ACTIVATION

PURPOSE:

This policy outlines guidelines in responding to and investigating missing adults and children. Additionally, it includes procedures for the activation of the statewide AMBER Alert System and/or the “A CHILD IS MISSING” program.

**POLICY
STATEMENT:**

The most critical stage in the investigation of missing persons involves the initial reaction of law enforcement to the situation. Generally, when law enforcement receives the report of a missing person, it is usually unclear as to whether the person left willingly, wandered off, was delayed, or is the victim of foul play. Uncertainty in these situations may cause law enforcement to develop preconceived preliminary opinions as to the whereabouts and probable return of the missing person. Preconceived opinions may result in the loss of critical information such as a witness or physical evidence. In the interest of citizen well being, it is the policy of the Sheriff’s Office to respond to every report of a missing person as if the person is in immediate danger until information is developed to indicate otherwise. Additionally, there is no waiting period for reporting a missing person.

**MISSING PERSON
INCIDENT REPORTS
AND CASE
ASSIGNMENT:**

A person may be declared “missing” when his/her whereabouts is unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject’s behavior patterns, plans or routines.

If the missing person is an adult and circumstances involved are not of a suspicious or unusual nature, a Telephone Report Unit report is written. A BOLO is aired by Communications. If the missing person is a juvenile or there are suspicious or unusual circumstances, a patrol deputy is immediately dispatched to take the incident report. See also GO-221.

EXAMPLES OF SUSPICIOUS/UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

- The missing person is a child 13 years of age or younger.
- The missing person is mentally incapacitated.
- The missing person suffers a medical condition that is potentially life threatening if left untreated or unattended.
- The missing person has demonstrated a potential for suicide.
- Based on available information it is determined the missing person is in a life-threatening situation.

- Based on available information it is believed that the missing person is a child who is in the company of adults who could endanger his or her welfare.
- The absence of the missing person is inconsistent with his or her established patterns of behavior and the deviation cannot be readily explained.
- Other circumstances are involved in the disappearance that would cause a reasonable person to conclude the missing person should be considered “at risk.”

Note – Both a motorized response and supervisor notification is required for all missing person incidents involving young children, the elderly, mentally ill persons, and the seriously ill or handicapped.

The **Criminal Investigations Division (CID)** investigates adult missing persons. The **SID – Juvenile Investigations Unit** investigates juvenile missing persons and runaways.

A deputy assigned to follow-up a missing person case is to:

1. Maintain contact with the complainant.
2. Report investigative progress to the missing person’s family on a regular basis.

**MISSING
CHILD/PERSON
CATEGORIES:**

Definitions -

FAMILY ABDUCTION - A non-custodial family member flees with a child, usually in direct violation of a court ordered custody arrangement.

NON-FAMILY ABDUCTION - A child who is taken by an unknown individual, through force or persuasion, usually in furtherance of additional victimization.

RUNAWAY - Most often a teenager, who leaves home voluntarily for a variety of reasons.

THROWN AWAY - A child whose caretaker makes no effort to recover the child who has run away, or who has been abandoned or deserted.

LOST OR OTHERWISE MISSING - A child who becomes separated from parents or caretakers under circumstances not indicating the likelihood of an abduction or voluntary absence. An adult whose whereabouts cannot be readily determined.

CALL TAKER**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Call takers are responsible for obtaining the following information from the complainant and relaying facts to the deputy while enroute to the scene:

1. Who is missing? Name and relationship of caller to missing party.
2. When person was last seen.
3. Brief description of missing party.
4. Description of abductors/suspect vehicles, if applicable.
5. Location where missing party was last seen.
6. Complete callback information.

FIRST RESPONDER**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The following are First Responder actions, considerations, and activities that will assist in performing competent, productive, and successful missing person investigations:

1. Interview complainant(s) who made the initial report.
 2. Confirm that adult/child is in fact missing.
 3. If the party missing is a child, verify the child's custody status.
 4. Identify circumstances of the disappearance.
 5. Determine when, where, and by whom the missing person was last seen.
 6. Interview individuals who last had contact with the missing person.
 7. If the missing party is a child, determine the child's zone of safety (that distance from the residence a child is routinely allowed to go with parental consent).
 8. Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.
 9. Based on available information, make an initial determination of the type of incident whether family abduction, non-family abduction, runaway, throwaway, lost or otherwise missing.
 10. Obtain a detailed description of the missing person, abductor, and any vehicles used.
 11. Secure photographs/video tapes of the missing person and the abductor, if available.
 12. Evaluate whether circumstances of missing person's disappearance meets AMBER Alert protocol. Discuss plan activation with supervisor.
 13. Relay detailed descriptive information to Communications for BOLO updates.
 14. Determine need for additional personnel and discuss need with supervisor.
 15. Obtain and note permission to search home or building where incident took place.
 16. Conduct an immediate, thorough search of the missing child's home, even if the child was reported missing from a different location.
-

17. Initiate a neighborhood canvass.
18. Ascertain if the missing person has a cellular telephone or other electronic communication device.
19. Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes.
20. Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured information about the missing person's disappearance.
21. Interview other family members, friends/associates, and friends of the family to determine when they last saw the missing person and what they think happened to the missing person.

**SUPERVISORY
RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The following are supervisory personnel actions, considerations, and activities that will assist in performing competent, productive, and successful missing person investigations:

1. Obtain written reports from the first responding deputy and other personnel at the scene.
2. Decide if circumstances of missing person's disappearance meet the protocol in place for activation of an AMBER Alert.
3. Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.
4. Determine the need of the Search and Rescue Team.
5. Establish a command post, if applicable.
6. Determine if additional assistance is necessary from: SID, CID, Victim-Witness Unit, SLED, and FBI.
7. Ensure that all required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and expedite their availability.
8. Ensure coordination/cooperation among all law enforcement personnel involved in the investigation and search effort.
9. Ensure that all required notifications are made.
10. Ensure that all agency policies and procedures are in compliance.
11. Be available to make any decisions or determinations as they develop.
12. Inform the Public Information Officer if the need exists to use media services.
13. Inform the Public Information Officer if AMBER Alert is activated.

**SEARCH AND RESCUE
TEAM:**

The Search and Rescue Team consists of properly trained personnel to assist in the search for endangered missing persons and wanted persons. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the management and use of the Search and Rescue Team.

Authorized use:

- The Search and Rescue Team will respond as requested by a Sheriff's Office Field Supervisor, or at the request of Law Enforcement Agencies in the County of Greenville.
- Requests by agencies outside of Greenville County are subject to existing mutual aid agreements, the approval of the Team Commander or the Search and Rescue Team Coordinator. In their absence the acting Platoon Commander may activate the team.
- Requests from other agencies or out of state requests are approved by the Sheriff or his designee.

**INVESTIGATIVE
DEPUTY
RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The following are investigative deputy actions, considerations, and activities that will assist in performing competent, productive, and successful missing person investigations:

1. Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
2. Correct and investigate the reasons for conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals.
3. Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected.
4. Develop and execute an investigative plan.
5. Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.
6. Ensure that details of the case are reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, if applicable.
7. Secure the child's latest medical and dental records, and if available fingerprints.
8. Establish a leads-management system to prioritize leads and ensure that each one is reviewed and followed up on.

Note – Medical, dental, and fingerprint records are critical when investigating unidentified children.

**MISSING PERSON
NCIC ENTRY:**

All missing adults or juveniles are immediately entered into NCIC by Communications. Removal of missing persons from NCIC is the responsibility of each investigating deputy.

**MISSING PERSON
SEARCH:**

Whenever deemed necessary by an on-duty supervisor, additional resources may be employed in a search for a missing person; i.e. canines, search and rescue, and Air Support. All Sheriff's Office law enforcement and civilian resources are available for this purpose. Age, mental/physical condition of the missing person, time of day, weather conditions and area terrain are factors that can place a missing person at risk.

Searches are mandatory for at risk or critically missing persons; see also the next section of this order describing the activation of AMBER Alert. See also GO-220.

**AMBER ALERT
SYSTEM:**

Required Criteria for Activation of the South Carolina AMBER Alert:

1. It is believed a child was abducted (taken from his or her environment unlawfully, without authority of law, and without permission from parents or legal guardian).
2. The child is 17 years old or younger, and it is believed the child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death; or an individual is 18 years old or older, and it is believed he or she is at a greater risk for immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death because the individual possesses a proven physical or mental disability.
3. All other possibilities for the victim's disappearance have been reasonably excluded.
4. There is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the victim, suspect, or vehicle used in the abduction.

NOTE - *To qualify for activation of AMBER Alert, a missing person investigation must meet all of the four required criteria.*

Procedure for Activating AMBER Alert:

1. The missing person is entered into NCIC and removed when located.
2. Only Captains and above may activate the AMBER Alert.
3. When the Sheriff or a Captain determines a case meets the criteria for AMBER Alert activation, the abduction is reported to the South Carolina Clearinghouse at (800)322-4453 or SLED Headquarters at (803)737-9000.
4. A completed South Carolina AMBER Alert Information Form (see attached) and a photograph of the victim are faxed to (803)896-7041.

What Will Result Upon Activation:

1. SLED will fax and e-mail the **South Carolina AMBER Alert Information Form** to radio and television stations designated by the South Carolina Broadcasters Association.
2. The Associated Press Control Bureau for South Carolina will provide this information for broadcast wires in North Carolina and Georgia.

3. SLED will notify all South Carolina law enforcement agencies, including DPS, DOT, FBI, and the South Carolina Truckers' Association.
4. The public will be notified by the news media every fifteen minutes for the next three hours.
5. After eight hours, any updates/cancellations should be made directly to the South Carolina Clearinghouse at 1-800-322-4453 using either the **South Carolina AMBER Alert Update Form** or the **South Carolina AMBER Alert Cancellation Form**.
6. In the event a citizen sees the child, abductor, and/or suspect vehicle, they should immediately call 911. The agency receiving this information will contact the Sheriff's Office with the citizen-supplied information.

At the conclusion of an AMBER Alert, SLED will:

1. Fax and e-mail a formal termination of alert to all radio/television stations and the Associated Press Control Bureau for South Carolina.
2. Notify all South Carolina law enforcement agencies, including DPS, DOT, FBI and the SC Truckers' Association.

AFTER-ACTION REVIEW – Upon conclusion of a South Carolina AMBER Alert, the Sheriff's Office and the South Carolina AMBER Alert Review Committee will assess the operational efficiency of the Alert to determine if any systematic changes are needed.

**“A CHILD IS MISSING”
PROGRAM:**

A CHILD IS MISSING (ACIM) is a not-for-profit program designed to provide timely information to the public about a missing person. **ACIM** generates telephone calls to local residents and businesses after initiation by the Sheriff's Office. This is a program that can be utilized when an incident does not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert. *It is this agency's policy to utilize ACIM only for missing children, elderly, and disabled persons.*

ACIM ACTIVATION - If the missing person is a child (2-16 years old), an elderly person (with Alzheimer's) or a disabled person (in danger) the investigating deputy's supervisor may activate **ACIM**. **ACIM** is available for use twenty-four/seven.

**FACTORS FOR
DETERMINING
USE OF ACIM:**

CHILDREN:

1. A child should be between 2 and 16 years old.
2. The complainant is an adult family member, teacher, or another adult who is responsible for the child.
3. Runaways deemed at-risk.
4. Stranger abduction prior to activating the AMBER Alert.

DISABLED PERSON - There is no age stipulation for a disabled person. For purposes of this policy, a disabled person will fall into one of the following categories:

1. The person has a physical or mental impairment that severely limits self-care, is elderly, or suffers from Alzheimer's or senile dementia.
2. The person is disoriented or unable to respond to simple questions regarding personal information such as name and address.
3. The person is dependent upon life sustaining medication.
4. The approving supervisor may take into account other circumstances that may influence using ACIM even if the person is a habitual runaway or walk-away. Examples of these circumstances are: suspected foul play, imminent severe weather, etc.

ACTIVATING ACIM:

Procedure -

1. The Shift Commander is to immediately call 1-888-875-ACIM (or 2246) (if no answer, call pager 1-954-492-4778); see page 10 of this order - **ACIM Information Checklist**.
2. The Shift Commander is to provide ACIM with telephone number 467-5535 as this agency's contact number for leads.
3. The Communications Center is to be notified about the ACIM activation.
4. ACIM activation is to be documented in the missing person incident report – see General Order 221.
5. Initially, Communications' personnel will man the ACIM phone; however, if necessary additional manpower may be assigned as needed.

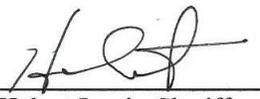
Leads and information received from a citizen concerning the missing person are to be documented on A Child is Missing-Leads and Information Sheet; see blank form included with this order. A Child is Missing-Leads and Information Sheets are to be forwarded to the supervisor in charge of the case. The supervisor in charge of the case depends on whether the incident was resolved during the initial reporting shift or the case was assigned to CID. After evaluation of the information, a supervisor is to take appropriate action.

If a sighting of the missing person is confirmed, the supervisor may want to consider re-activating ACIM. The second telephone alert should include the most recent known location. ACIM will relay this location in it's notification of residents. This is particularly important if the sighting location is in a different ZIP Code than the original report.

If ACIM is activated more than once in the same case, each activation is to be documented under the original case number on a supplemental incident report form. Documentation is to include activation by date and time, and the location the missing person was last seen.

ACIM FOLLOW-UP:

If the missing person is found, the supervisor on-scene is to notify ACIM. ACIM will fax a Case Follow Up Report form to the Sheriff's Office. The supervisor in charge of the case is to complete this report and fax it back to ACIM at 1-954-763-4569. A copy of the report is to be sent to the Records Division for inclusion with the original missing person incident report.



Hobart Lewis, Sheriff

ACIM
Information Checklist

When reporting a missing person to A Child is Missing, the Shift Commander is to provide the following information by Toll-free (888) 875-2246 or Emergency Back-Up Pager (954) 492-4778:

- Name of missing person
- DOB of missing person
- Gender
- Nationality
- Height
- Weight
- Eye color
- Hair color
- Any other characteristics such as glasses, tattoos, piercing, scars, etc.
- Clothing description
- Location last seen **with zip code**
- Provide accurate spelling of street names
- Provide nearest major intersection
- Residence if different than last seen location
- Date and time last seen
- Is the person a habitual runaway? First time missing?
- Were friends/family notified?
- Is there water or wooded areas near the last location last seen?
- Did the missing person leave in a vehicle, on a bicycle or skateboard?
- If in a vehicle, what is the vehicle description and license plate?
- Is there foul play suspected? Parental/stranger abduction?
- Was there a confrontation prior to the person's disappearance?
- Does the person have a substance abuse problem?
- Is the person taking medication?
- Case number assigned to the case
- Agency telephone number for the public to call if they have information
- Name of deputy in charge of the case
- Contact number for deputy in charge of the case – cell, beeper or land line.

SOUTH CAROLINA AMBER ALERT INFORMATION FORM
SOUTH CAROLINA LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Fax (803) 896-7041 (If problems, call (800) 322-4453 or (803) 737-9000)

Reporting Agency Information

Name of Reporting Agency:

Name /Title of Reporting Individual:

Contact Number for Reporting Agency

Fax Number for Reporting Agency

NCIC Number

- Does the law enforcement agency believe that the child has been abducted (taken from their environment unlawfully, without authority of law, and without permission from the child's parent or legal guardian)?

- If the child is 17 years old or younger, does the law enforcement agency believe the child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death, or if the individual is 18 years old or older, does the law enforcement agency believe the individual is at greater risk for immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death because the individual possesses a proven physical or mental disability?

- Have all other possibilities for the victim's disappearance been reasonably excluded?

- Is there sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the victim, suspect, or vehicle used in the abduction?

***IMPORTANT: Do NOT send an AMBER alert if the answer is NO to ANY of these questions.**

Date of Abduction: _____ Time of Abduction: _____

Last Known Location: _____

Direction of Travel: _____

VICTIM DATE: (Please FAX a photograph of the victim to (803) 896-7041, if available)

Victim Name: _____

Age: _____ DOB: _____ Weight: _____ Height: _____ Race: _____ Sex: _____

Eyes: _____ Eyewear: _____ Hair/Hairstyle: _____

Clothing: _____

Unique Physical Characteristics: _____

SUSPECT DATA: (Please FAX a photograph of the suspect to (803) 896-7041, if available)

Suspect Name: _____

Age: _____ DOB: _____ Weight: _____ Height: _____ Race: _____ Sex: _____

Eyes: _____ Eyewear: _____ Hair/Hairstyle: _____

Clothing: _____

Unique Physical Characteristics: _____

VEHICLE DATA:

Make: _____ Model: _____ Year: _____ Color: _____

Tag: _____ State: _____ Any Other Description: _____

Created by: _____

SOUTH CAROLINA AMBER

ALERT UPDATE FORM

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ AM/PM

TO: SOUTH CAROLINA LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

FAX (803) 896-7041 (If problem, call (800) 322-4453 or (803) 737-9000)

FROM: _____

CONTACT PERSON:

TELEPHONE #:

FACSIMILE #:

UPDATE INFORMATION

NCIC#: _____

VICTIM'S NAME:

DATE OF BIRTH:

UPDATED INFORMATION:

SOUTH CAROLINA AMBER
ALERT CANCELLATION FORM

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ AM/PM

TO: SOUTH CAROLINA LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

FAX (803) 896-7041 (If problem, call (800) 322-4453 or (803) 737-9000)

FROM: _____

CONTACT PERSON:

TELEPHONE #:

FACSIMILE #:

CANCELLATION INFORMATION

NCIC#: _____

VICTIM'S NAME:

DATE OF BIRTH:

REASON FOR CANCELLATION : _____

