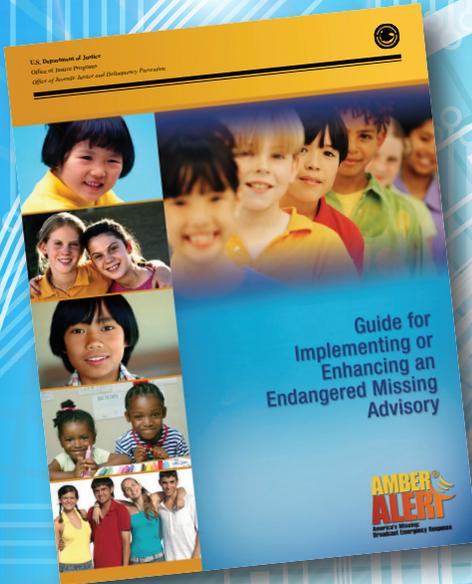


# THE AMBER ADVOCATE

December 2011

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This publication was prepared under Cooperative Agreement number 2009-MC-CX-K058 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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# Front Lines: Relationships Become Critical In Four-State AMBER Alert

A rare 4-state AMBER Alert was issued on July 13, 2011, shortly after 3 people were murdered and a suspect took off with a hostage and a baby. Twenty-three-year-old Matthew Slocum allegedly shot and killed his mother, stepfather, and stepbrother and then set their White Creek, New York, house on fire. He then forced his 23-year-old girlfriend Loretta Colegrove and their 4-month-old son Raymond Slocum into his car as he fled.

New York officials issued an AMBER Alert at 1:42 p.m. because they believed the child was in imminent danger. Law enforcement authorities learned from a family member that Slocum was in Massachusetts attempting to sell numerous weapons.

“We have never activated an AMBER Alert when we knew the suspect was not in the state,” said New York AMBER Alert Coordinator Gary Kelly. “We also knew he might head to Connecticut, and we figured it would be very simple for him to jump back to New York to get to Connecticut.”

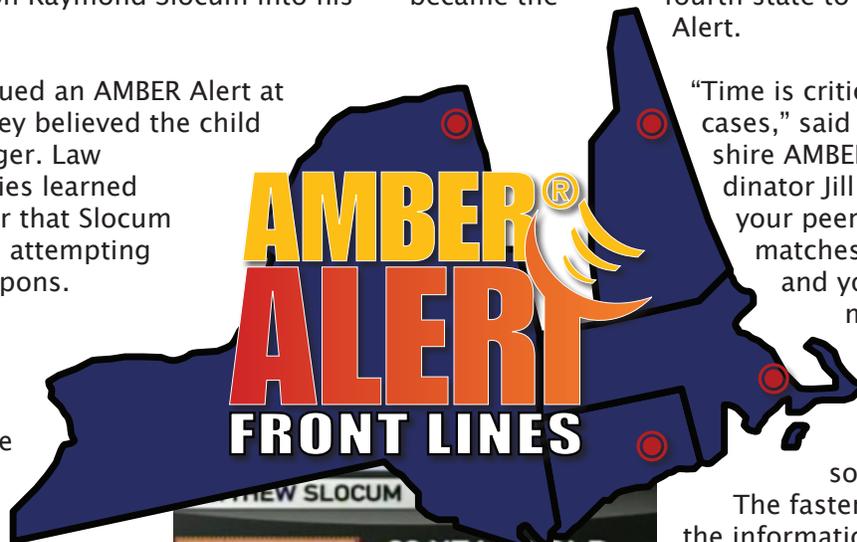
Kelly asked his counterparts in Massachusetts and Connecticut to issue AMBER Alerts. Massachusetts AMBER Alert Coordinator Nicole Morrell said the case clearly met her state’s criteria, and she decided without hesitation to issue an alert.

“Gary contacted me directly, which saved a lot of time overall,” said Morell. “Trying to reach the right person can be problematic, but we are fortunate that the Northeast states know each other so well.”

Connecticut State Police Sgt. Corinne Sandberg was also quick to issue an alert once she received the details.

“It is a matter of trust,” said Sandberg. “We are all law enforcement, and we all have to work together. We are going to get the AMBER Alert out every time.”

During those first frantic hours, information also came in that the suspect could also be headed to New Hampshire. Within minutes, New Hampshire became the fourth state to issue an AMBER Alert.



“Time is critical in these cases,” said New Hampshire AMBER Alert Coordinator Jill Rockey. “Trust your peers. If their alert matches your criteria and you have information the child has entered your state, then activate the alert as soon as possible.”

The faster the public gets the information, the sooner the child is located.”

At 6:23 p.m., the suspect’s vehicle was found in Gilsum, New Hampshire. However, the suspect and the victims were not found. All 4 states decided to keep the alert active.

“As soon as New Hampshire notified us they had the vehicle, we held off canceling the alert until we knew they had the child,” said Sandberg. She said another recent AMBER Alert had been canceled prematurely when the suspect and vehicle had been found, but it was unclear whether the child was safe.

“Once we heard the vehicle was found in New Hampshire, we removed it from our sign boards but replaced it with a generic AMBER Alert message to keep



ABOVE: Suspect, Matthew Slocum

BELOW: Victim, Loretta Colegrove



Continued on page 6

# BEYOND AMBER: States Expand Alerts for Other Dangers

On August 18, 2009, Katy (Texas) Police Officer Julio Reyes abducted fellow officer Rachel Hillsman at gunpoint. Exactly 1 year earlier, Texas had initiated the Blue Alert system to notify the public when a law enforcement officer was killed or seriously injured in the line of duty. In a strange coincidence, on the first anniversary of the system, Texas issued its first alert for an officer who had been abducted by another officer.

After the alert was issued, police launched an extensive search on the ground and in the air. The suspect and hostage were found near some homes under construction. Reyes opened fire and used Hillsman as a human shield to get away. A standoff lasted several hours before Reyes released Hillsman unharmed. Before officers could move in to arrest Reyes, he shot himself. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

The state has issued two more alerts since that day. Texas AMBER Alert Coordinator Sam Allen says the Blue Alert has become an important tool for the state.



“The Blue Alert is definitely important because it is such a heinous crime to attack a police officer who is protecting our life and liberty,” said Allen. “It is a way for the public to give back to the people who serve us on a day-to-day basis.”

On October 17, Utah became the tenth state to initiate an alert for fallen officers. Six more states have pending legislation for a Blue Alert.



“We have learned from the AMBER Alert how the public can quickly provide important tips and save lives,” said Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff. “The Blue Alert will also protect the public and other officers.”

Utah Law enforcement officers and broadcasters worked together to create a plan that would help fallen officers without creating any confusion with the AMBER Alert. In Utah, a Blue Alert notifies law enforcement and the media; it is also posted on highway signs. Broadcasters decide when to break into programming.

In Utah and most states, only law enforcement can issue a Blue Alert that meet strict criteria:

1. Has the suspect killed, seriously injured, or assaulted a law enforcement officer with a deadly weapon?
2. Is the suspect an imminent threat to the public and other law enforcement personnel?
3. Is information available for the public about the suspect, the suspect’s vehicle, and vehicle tag?
4. Will public dissemination of available information help avert further harm or accelerate apprehension of the suspect?



“Law enforcement officers put their lives on the line every day,” said Layton (Utah) Police Chief Terry Keefe. “The Blue Alert will quickly let law enforcement and the public know that an officer is down and a suspect is on the loose.”

California also has a Blue Alert system, but so far, the state has not used it. California Highway Patrol Assistant Chief LD Maples helped implement the Blue Alert while serving as the state’s AMBER Alert Coordinator. Initially, Maples was reluctant to add another alert.



“We were always concerned about something that would affect AMBER Alert,” said Maples. “But anyone who will threaten law enforcement is threatening society. People who kill police officers have no hesitation to kill any other person, and we need to bring

those resources to bear to make sure no one else gets hurt.”

So far, California and Texas have not seen a negative impact on the AMBER Alert. “I did not see it watering down the AMBER Alert,” said Allen. “It would have an impact if we had hundreds of officers being killed, but fortunately that is not the case.”

## ENDANGERED MISSING ADVISORY

The Blue Alert may be new, but 39 states have a plan to notify the public for missing people who do not fit the AMBER Alert criteria. Six years ago, 5 states had an alert for non-AMBER Alert cases.

In March 2011, the Department of Justice published the “Guide for Implementing or Enhancing an Endangered Missing Advisory.” (Find it at <http://bit.ly/EMAdoc>) The guide suggests ways that states can develop a plan to help find missing endangered people without jeopardizing the success of the AMBER Alert.

For most states, the advisory goes out to law enforcement and the media. Broadcasters decide whether they want to break into programming.

Maples says it was important to have a title and a plan for how law enforcement responds when a person is missing and in danger.

“Even before the guidelines came out, we implemented something to give a title of what we do when we do not issue an AMBER Alert,” said Maples. “It is not just a case of doing nothing. We always do something. The Endangered Missing Advisory lets the public know we are doing something that has led to safe recoveries in many cases.”

Utah was one of the first states to develop an alert for cases that did not meet the AMBER Alert criteria. During the first 5 years, Utah issued 92 advisories for 100 people, of which 80 people returned home safely, and 17 people were recovered specifically because of the advisory.

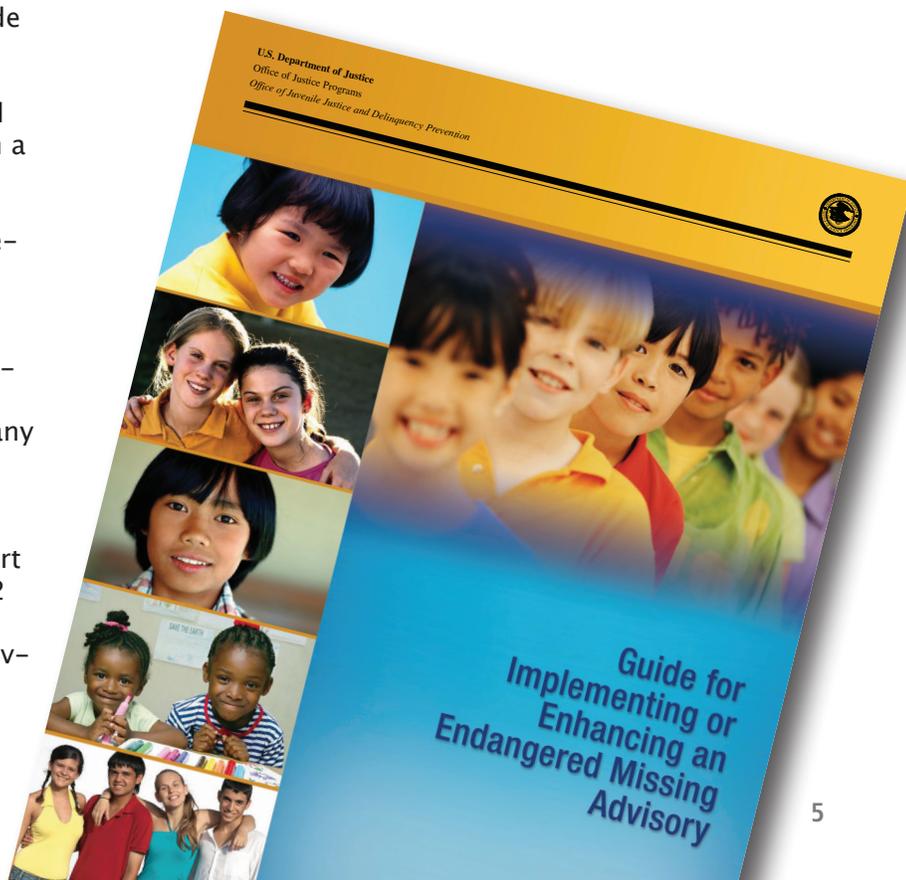
About half of the states have no age restrictions for the advisory. Most of the states with age restrictions issue advisories for the elderly only. An alert for a senior citizen is often called a Silver Alert, and senior citizen groups have lobbied federal and state legislators to create national or state Silver Alert programs.

## BOTTOM LINE ON ADDITIONAL ALERTS

It should not be a surprise that the success of the AMBER Alert has spurred others to imitate the program for other uses. Many AMBER Alert partners seem eager to try something new as long as it does not negatively impact what is tried and true.

“As legislatures pass more of these programs, we need to make sure the public is not desensitized,” said Allen.

“Whether it is a Blue or Silver Alert, you are still meeting needs, but keep the AMBER Alert what it is,” concluded Maples. ☺



# Front Lines

## Continued from page 3

the public engaged,” said Morrell. “We had a strong feeling they were in New Hampshire, but there is always that small chance they found other means of transportation.”

Looking back, Kelly said it was a mistake to put out an update stating that authorities were no longer looking for the vehicle.

“The abductor could hear that on the radio,” said Kelly. “We should have just kept taking vehicle sighting calls without jeopardizing the investigation.”

By 9:30 p.m., SWAT teams found Slocum hiding in a relative’s home near where the vehicle was found. Police ordered Slocum to surrender, and a half hour later, Colgrove emerged from the home clutching her baby.

“I am just glad my daughter and my grandchild are safe,” said James Sicotte, Colegrove’s stepfather, to reporters.

Communication became crucial during the AMBER Alert involving 4 states. Most of the coordinators credit their ability to react quickly to the relationships developed at the National AMBER Alert Symposiums.

“The relationships developed at the annual conferences pay off huge dividends,” said Kelly. “We did not have to jump through hoops or look for numbers



Matthew Slocum allegedly shot and killed his mother Lisa Harrington, stepfather Dan Harrington and stepbrother Joshua O’Brien and then set their White Creek, New York, house on fire. He then forced his 23-year-old girlfriend Loretta Colegrove and their 4-month-old son Raymond Slocum into his car as he fled.



because we had already met and knew each other and trusted each other.”

“The National AMBER Alert Symposiums were absolutely beneficial in building reliable contacts especially amongst our Northeast states,” added Morrell. “The relationships remain strong and we can, without hesitation, rely on one other for help.”

Sandberg began working with Connecticut’s AMBER Alert Plan in January but had never met the other coordinators or been to a symposium. She said she learned a lot from the previous AMBER Alert Coordinator and from AMBER Alert reviews held earlier that year.

“We want to improve the AMBER Alert Plan. Even if the alert went flawlessly, we want to find out what worked and why,” said Sandberg.

Slocum faces 3 second-degree murder charges in connection with the deaths of his 44-year-old mother, Lisa Harrington; her husband, Dan Harrington, 41; and Dan Harrington’s son, Joshua O’Brien, 24. Slocum’s attorney has claimed he was not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect or because he suffered an “extreme emotional disturbance” before the killings. ☹

# PROFILE: Illinois Broadcaster Is Longtime Fan Of AMBER Alert

**D**ennis Lyle has a youthful smile, but he is a longtime veteran when it comes to the AMBER Alert. In 2001, Lyle used his experience as a broadcaster and his passion as a parent to help create a state AMBER Alert program in Illinois.

“The beauty of the AMBER Alert is it is a ‘how to manual’ on how to find abducted children,” said Lyle. “The AMBER Alert offers cut and dried procedures and a game plan.”

Lyle’s broadcasting career began as an on-air personality in college. He later went into sales and management, and then purchased two radio stations. In 1999, Lyle was elected president of the Illinois Broadcasters Association. Two years later, he took up the challenge to use radio and TV to help find abducted children.

“I like the way the media has embraced and has become a critical component of the AMBER Alert,” said Lyle. “I like the fact that everyone has their marching orders, and everyone understands what their role is. People do not step on each other’s toes, and no one challenges who makes the call. The cooperation has contributed to many successes.”

Lyle has spent the past decade educating fellow broadcasters about the AMBER Alert program. At a recent state convention, he had more than 500 broadcasters, law enforcement officers, state legislators, and other AMBER Alert partners take part in an interactive training session on the child abduction notification plan.

He also has pushed his colleagues to air public service announcements about the AMBER Alert and writes regularly about the alert in his newsletter for broadcasters. Lyle’s efforts were recognized in 2010 when he was named the AMBER Alert Broadcaster/Media Person of the Year.

“This is one of the biggest honors I have ever received,” said Lyle. “Everybody involved in the AMBER Alert is dedicated to what it can mean to the recovery of abducted children. It is a labor of love, and we will do everything we can to keep the program alive.”

Lyle says much of the credit should be shared

with Illinois AMBER Alert Coordinator and Missing Person Clearinghouse Director Cinda Lubich. He encourages all state AMBER Alert Coordinators to develop close relationships with their state broadcasting association.

“Herding different disciplines together is like herding cats,” said Lyle. “It takes someone with Cinda’s law enforcement side to help us understand the minor details about what does or does not meet the AMBER Alert criteria.”

The National AMBER Alert Symposiums have also been a critical place for Lyle to learn from his broadcaster colleagues and other AMBER Alert partners. “It is a great opportunity to sit across from someone in law enforcement and the media to discuss criteria and what can be done better,” said Lyle.

Recently Lyle spent time preparing for the national test of the Emergency Alert System, which was held on November 9. “The test proved its worth. It identified what worked and what could be corrected,” said Lyle. Likewise, the broadcaster said each AMBER Alert Plan should be constantly reviewed and tested so it will work when needed most.

As for the future, Lyle said he would like to see AMBER Alerts on more media platforms, and he wishes people would have to opt out of getting alerts on their phones instead of opting in.

One final wish: “I would love to see the day when you do not need an AMBER Alert.” Until that happens, Lyle plans to keep learning and teaching others about the AMBER Alert. ☺



Dennis Lyle receives the 2010 AMBER Alert Broadcaster/Media Person of the Year Award from Ron Laney (left) and Marilyn Roberts, Deputy Administrator for Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (right)

# AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

## MEXICO TIES AMBER ALERT TO EFFORTS TO STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**M**exican law enforcement officers detained more than 1,000 men and women in July during an investigation of sexual exploitation and human trafficking in Juárez. The Mexican Public Safety Ministry said the sweep was part of Mexico's child abduction recovery plan under the new National AMBER Alert Program.

Officers removed people out of 24 bars, 3 hotels, and 2 guest homes and transported them to state police offices. A total of 20 female minors were rescued, and 500 men and 530 women were



detained on suspicion of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

On the same day of the operation, the AMBER Alert operation was launched and Mexican officials issued an Alba Alert for an 18-year-old girl who went missing on her way to apply for a job in downtown Juárez. The

alert was sent to U.S. immigration authorities in case she crossed the international bridge. ☺

Read more: <http://bit.ly/AAmexico>

## CHIHUAHUA LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO FIND MISSING WOMEN AND GIRLS



The Office of the Chihuahua Attorney General in Juárez, Mexico, passed out fliers in November as part of a campaign to stop the disappearances of women and girls. The fliers were used to alert people to the Alba Protocol, a program similar to the AMBER Alert, which is used to notify the public when a person is missing. The Attorney General's Office said there are 57 current investigations about missing women and young girls in Juárez so far this year. The public can report missing women to the toll free number 01-800-838-78-30. ☺

## CANADIAN TRAINING CONSIDERS ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA WITH THE AMBER ALERT



The Canadian Public Relations Society held a training session to consider the increased role of social media in crisis situations such as an AMBER Alert and the challenges in dealing with extremely sensitive information. The October 26 meeting in Calgary included speakers from the Missing Children Society of Canada and looked at the case of Kienan Hebert, a 3-year-old boy who was found safe after being abducted in September. ☺



## ONTARIO HOSTS SEMINAR ON CHILD ABDUCTIONS

At a crime prevention seminar in Ontario, Canada, New York State Trooper Sayeh Rivazfar shared her story of how her mother's former boyfriend brutally attacked her when she was 8 years old and killed her 6-year-old sister. She asked the 210 police officers, social service workers, parole officers, and daycare workers at the October conference to remember they are helping children, not just being assigned a file number. Rivazfar said efforts to prevent child abductions have improved, but more needs to be done. ☺

Read more: <http://bit.ly/AAontario>

## AMBER ALERT HELPS FIND DISABLED CHILD IN GREECE

Greece activated the AMBER Alert HELLAS in September when a 5-year-old Nigerian boy disappeared from his cousin's apartment in Athens. The boy has Down Syndrome and was staying with his cousin while his mother was hospitalized. The non-profit group Smile of the Child used the European Hotline Number for Missing Children to mobilize police in the area. A police investigation did not produce any leads, and authorities decided to issue the alert because of the time of night and the boy's medical condition. Because of the AMBER Alert, the child was found 3 hours later in a nearby building. He was visibly frightened but in good health. ☺

Read more about Smile of the Child: <http://bit.ly/AAgreece>

# YOUR PORTAL TO AMBER ALERT INFORMATION

Have you visited the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program on the Criminal Justice Collaboration Portal at [www.thecjportal.org/amberalert](http://www.thecjportal.org/amberalert)? If not, you are missing out on a wealth of program information, announcements, calendar updates, document downloads, discussion boards, and more. In addition to the vast amount of information available to the public, the 'CJ Portal' offers AMBER Alert partners private access to information through personal site accounts, allowing AMBER Alert Coordinators, State Missing Children Clearinghouse Managers, and active Child Abduction Response Team (CART) leaders to collaborate and communicate securely around important child protection issues.

This new AMBER Alert Partners area of the portal is not accessible to the public. AMBER Alert Program personnel and Regional Liaisons regularly update the area to ensure AMBER Alert Partners are informed of the latest news, information, and resources. Discussion boards, shared document libraries, and other collaborative resources are also available to facilitate effective work among AMBER Alert Partners across the country and around the globe. The portal has replaced the former AMBER Alert Extranet and is now your one-stop online resource for all AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program information. If you have questions about accessing or using the portal, call program personnel for assistance at 877-71-AMBER or email [askamber@fvtc.edu](mailto:askamber@fvtc.edu).

The screenshot shows the AMBER Alert Collaboration Portal website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'CRIMINAL JUSTICE COLLABORATION PORTAL' and 'KEEPING YOU CONNECTED'. Below that, there are logos for various agencies like CUCI, CPTC, ICAC, NNTA, and DCO. The main content area has a sidebar on the left with links for 'Training & Event Calendars', 'AMBER Alert Training Calendar', 'All CJ Portal Events Calendar', 'AMBER Alert Information and Resource Documents', 'Public Announcements', 'Quick Links to Related Sites', 'About Us', 'Contact Us', 'Training', 'Regional Training Schedule', 'Onsite Courses Overview', 'Distance Learning', 'Technical Assistance Overview', 'Technical Assistance Services', 'Technical Assistance Training', '2010 AMBER Alert Symposium', '2010 AMBER Alert Symposium in Pictures', and 'Projects'. The main content area features a large banner with a photo of children and the text 'AMBER Alert Collaboration Portal - Your Official Site For Information Sharing and Support'. To the right of the banner is a 'THE MISSION' section with the text: 'AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program. The mission of the AMBER Alert Program is to safely recover missing, endangered, or abducted children through the coordinated efforts of law enforcement, media, transportation, and other partners by using training and technology to enhance response capacities and capabilities and increase public participation.' Below that is an 'AMBER ADVOCATE' section with the text: 'Bringing You the Latest Information on AMBER Alert Programs, Partnerships and Progress!'. In the center, there's a section titled 'AMBER ALERT IN ACTION' with a sub-section 'AMBER Alert Plan Statistics' showing: 'Successful Recoveries 542', 'Total Plans Nationwide 120', 'Statewide: 53', 'Regional: 29', and 'Local: 38'. At the bottom, there's a 'WHAT'S NEW WITH AMBER ALERT' section with a table for 'Title' and 'Modified'.

## AMBER Alert Success Stories

### June 12 - Wilson, North Carolina

The Wilson (North Carolina) Police Department issued an AMBER Alert for 5-year-old Isaac Piedra after his father beat and stabbed the boy's mother. The father took the boy early in the morning, and authorities feared he would flee with the child to Mexico. Police worked with law enforcement officers from the county, U.S. Marshal's Office, Team Adam, and NCMEC to find the victim and notified the border patrol. After interviewing family members, the child was found safe at a relative's home at 10 p.m. The child's mother recovered from her injuries.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/AAsuccess1>

### November 1 - Shasta County, California

Motorists spotted a suspect's vehicle when an AMBER Alert was issued for 2 young sisters after a neighbor allegedly abducted them. One motorist said it was easy to spot the SUV after it drove under a highway sign with the vehicle's description. The sisters, ages 5 and 7, were found safe, and the suspect has been charged with kidnapping, child endangerment, and willful cruelty to a child.

# ODDS & ENDS

## NEW YORK CREATES GOLD ALERT

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed a law in July to create the Gold Alert, a statewide system for missing vulnerable adults, similar to the nationwide Amber Alert program. The Gold Alert will distribute photographs and posters with a toll-free 24-hour hotline when cognitively impaired individuals have wandered away from home and gone missing for an extended period of time. “By creating this alert system, we are protecting vulnerable adults who go missing from potential harm and helping families find and return their loved ones to safety,” said Governor Cuomo. ☺

Read more: <http://bit.ly/AAGoldalert>



## CITY LAUNCHES ENDANGERED MISSING ADVISORY AFTER TODDLER GOES MISSING

The disappearance of a 3-year-old girl prompted the Bridgeport (West Virginia) Police Department to launch an Endangered Missing Advisory program for cases where vehicle information is not available. Police began searching for Aliayah Lunsford on September 24 after she went missing but did not issue an AMBER Alert because the state’s criteria requires vehicle information. Community members started a petition to create “Aliayah’s Law,” so an alert could go out without vehicle information. The police plan to use the advisory for all cases that do not meet the AMBER Alert criteria. ☺

Read more: <http://bit.ly/AAlunsford>



## UTAH HOLDS STATE'S LARGEST AMBER ALERT TRAINING

More than 230 Utah law enforcement officers and other AMBER Alert partners attended a free statewide conference called “When Seconds Count: Abducted Children, Fallen Officers, and Missing Persons.” At the training, Erin Runnion and Elaine Runyan-Simmons shared their experiences after their daughters were abducted and murdered. Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff announced the launch of the Blue Alert for fallen officers and a name change for the Endangered Person Advisory. The alert for non-AMBER Alert cases is now called the Endangered Missing Advisory. The Davis County Chamber of Commerce raised the funds to support the 1-day conference. ☺

Read more: <http://1.usa.gov/AAutah>



## ARIZONA HOLDS CHILD ABDUCTION DRILL

Law enforcement officers in Gilbert, Arizona, responded to a mock child abduction on September 26 to become a certified Child Abduction Response Team. The same officers had responded to a real AMBER Alert earlier in the month for a missing 5-year-old girl. Fourteen law enforcement agencies participated in the drill. ☺

## TULSA TESTS CHILD ABDUCTION RECOVERY PLAN

The Tulsa (Oklahoma) Police Department’s Disaster Response Team went through an AMBER Alert drill on October 12 to test its preparedness for a real child abduction. The officers identified obstacles during an abduction, and they issued the needed information within 18 minutes. They also decided that since officers are not trained in taking calls, they would invite dispatchers to the next drill. ☺

# ODDS & ENDS

## MOTORCYCLISTS RAISE \$18,000 FOR MINNESOTA AMBER ALERT PROGRAM

A group of motorcycle enthusiasts handed an \$18,000 check to Patty Wetterling on October 22, the 23rd anniversary of the abduction of her 11-year-old son Jacob, to support the Minnesota AMBER Alert Program. The group has raised more than \$100,000 for AMBER Alert since 2003. 🍷

Read more: <http://bit.ly/AAmotorcycle>



## LETTERS TO THE AMBER ADVOCATE

The Telecommunicators Online Training Course has been one of the most informative, well structured, online courses that I have participated in. I would recommend this course to anyone who has or may deal with a missing person or AMBER Alert file.

**Beverly MacEachern**  
*Police Dispatcher, Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to receive such valuable training through the Internet. I have learned so much and believe this knowledge will assist me in helping others working in the child protection field.

**Jeannie Gulhan Sisman**  
*Vice President, Foundation for the Prevention of Juvenile Crimes and Offences, Istanbul, Turkey*

The training was great! We learned so much that we can bring back to our team and use and look forward to more training in the future or possibly hosting one at our location.

**Ann Lewis-Hamer**  
*Detective/Sergeant, Allegheny County Police, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

[amber-net.org](http://amber-net.org) | [askamber@fvtc.edu](mailto:askamber@fvtc.edu)

