

State Patrol Backs Amber Alerts Via Wireless Emergency Alert System

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Washington citizens may have noticed in the last few months receiving AMBER Alerts on their cell phones as "emergency alerts." Beginning January 1, 2013, the Wireless Emergency Alert System was launched nationally by the Department of Justice and the Federal Emergency Management Agency in cooperation with the Wireless Carrier industry. There are three different alerts issued through the Wireless Emergency Alert system (also known as CMAS, Commercial Mobile Alerting System). Presidential Alerts - Alerts issued by the President or designee. Imminent Threat Alerts - Alerts include severe man-made or natural disasters. AMBER Alerts. Users may "opt out" of AMBER alerts and Imminent Threat Alerts by contacting their wireless carrier or following the link below for individual carrier instructions for each device and how to turn it off. Presidential Alerts cannot be opted out of. The public should be cautioned, however, that "opting out" of receiving an AMBER alert via the WEA will affect their ability to receive AMBER alerts when they are travelling outside their cell phone numbers "home" area. The WEA uses geographic locations of cell phone devices for notifications, not cell numbers. So anyone travelling through the area of an AMBER alert will receive the alert. These alerts are not text messages; instead they are point to point messages that are location driven.

The Washington State Patrol (WSP) oversees the master AMBER Alert plan in Washington State using a State AMBER Alert Advisory Committee comprised of key stakeholders. This committee is in the process of writing procedures for activation parameters using CMAS to ensure the public that they are receiving alerts through their cell phones ONLY when enough information is known to assist in locating the child through these methods and the timing including the time of day is conducive to public awareness. Over the weekend, an AMBER Alert was sent using the CMAS system during the early morning hours. Although the Alert successfully led to the recovery of the endangered child, the WSP has received multiple complaints about the timing. It's the WSP's hope that people don't "opt out" of these advisories that serve a very useful purpose in broadcasting important updates about abducted children and are committed to ensure CMAS is being used at an appropriate time of day to avoid citizens "opting out" of the CMAS program. It's important to remember that the reason for an AMBER Alert is to assist in the recovery of an abducted child believed to be in danger. Issuing an AMBER Alerts have assisted in the successful recovery of over 640 children from their abductors nationwide. That number includes this weekend's successful recovery of Brayden Blasius who had been abducted from the state of Montana. He was located in Fife, WA and police there are giving full credit to the AMBER Alert system for the successful recovery. For more information on WEA/CMAS alerts see the following website: http://www.ctia.org/consumer_info/safety/index.cfm/AID/12082