



# WEST VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Operational Policy

### OG3750 Amber Alert

#### 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to Members on the effective and appropriate use of the Amber Alert system as a tool used by police to assist in certain child abduction cases to search for the Child and the suspect.

#### 2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

“Abduction” means an incident where a child is removed from his or her environment without the permission of the child’s parent, legal guardian or representative.

“Amber Alert” means a tool used in certain child abduction situations to assist in searching for and locating the child/person and suspect through partnership among the province’s law enforcement community, government agencies, media broadcasting agencies, and the public.

“Authorized Officer” means the OIC Operations or his/ her designate, or the assigned Duty Officer outside normal business hours.

“Child” means a person under the age of 18.

“CPIC” means the Canadian Police Information Center.

“Department” means the West Vancouver Police Department.

“Duty Officer” means the on-call Executive Officer (Inspector rank or above and includes Acting Inspector), outside normal business hours.

“ECOMM” means the agency providing emergency communications operations for the region of southwest B.C., coordinating 9-1-1 service for

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police, fire, and ambulance service, and providing call-taking and dispatch services for multiple agencies in the Lower Mainland area.

“NMCS” means the National Missing Children Services, an RCMP agency to help prevent child abductions, find missing children, and assist parents, law enforcement agencies, and non-governmental organizations dedicated to finding missing children through partnership and collective dedication.

“Member” means a sworn peace officer employed at the Department.

### 3.0 POLICY

3.1 The Department will activate an Amber Alert in child abduction cases that meet established criteria.

3.2 An Amber Alert may be activated only when all the following activation criteria have been met:

- a) the victim is under the age of 18;
- b) police have reasonable grounds to believe that the victim has been abducted;
- c) police have reasonable grounds to believe that the victim is in imminent danger;
- d) police have obtained enough descriptive information about the victim and either the abductor, or an involved vehicle, to believe that dissemination to the public could help to locate the victim; and
- e) police believe that the Amber Alert can be issued in a time frame that would provide a reasonable expectation that the child could be returned or the abductor could be apprehended.

3.3 An Amber Alert will not be activated to resolve custody disputes unless violence, verbal threats or life threatening actions have been demonstrated by the abducting parent.

### 4.0 PROCEDURES

4.1 The Member attending the initial call of a missing Child/abduction will obtain as much of the following information as possible, relaying it to the Dispatcher as received;

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## Child/Victim Information

- a) location, date and time the Child was last seen;
- b) full name, nicknames, age, sex, race, height, weight, hair/eye colour;
- c) description of Child's clothing;
- d) identifiable markings that may assist in identifying the Child;
- e) medical issues the Child has, e.g. need for prescription medication, allergies or other pressing medical conditions;
- f) belongings in the Child's possession when he or she was last seen (book bags, backpacks, game cases, notebooks);
- g) cellular communications device information for tracking purposes;
- h) recent photograph(s), preferably a close-up of the Child's face;
- i) any other information that may assist in the investigation.

## Abductor Information

- a) name (if known), age, sex, race, height, weight, hair/eye colour;
- b) clothing, dress, jewelry, body piercing, facial hair, glasses or other identifying information;
- c) last known direction of travel and possible destination; and
- d) if traveling in a vehicle; the abductor's vehicle description, including year, make, model, colour, license plate, distinctive insignia, personalization or damage.

4.2 Immediately upon becoming aware that the activation criteria for an Amber Alert may exist, the investigating Member will notify the Duty NCO.

4.3 In consultation with the Member, the Duty NCO will consider the circumstances and determine whether the activation criteria have been met. If warranted, the Duty NCO will immediately contact the Authorized Officer and request that an Amber Alert be activated.

4.4 If satisfied that the activation criteria have been met, the Authorized Officer will authorize the activation of the Amber Alert and cause the following protocol to be followed:

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- a) the Duty NCO will notify the RCMP Divisional Amber Alert Activation Team at 1-888-542-6237 or 1-888-54AMBER, that the criterion for Amber Alert activation has been met. The Duty NCO will consult and liaise with the RCMP Divisional Amber Alert Activation Team regarding the Amber Alert activation and notification of surrounding agencies and media;
  - b) the Dispatcher will:
    - i) activate the tone alert on the dispatch channel of the police radio;
    - ii) advise all on-duty members that an Amber Alert is being activated and provide details of the circumstances;
    - iii) request that radio transmissions be limited to urgent matters; and
    - iv) send a CPIC message containing all relevant information to all surrounding agencies including E-COMM.
- 4.5 The Media Relations Officer will be notified and may be called-out to perform media relations duties in connection with the Amber Alert.
- 4.6 The Duty NCO will call out such additional Members and staff as deemed appropriate.
- 4.7 Updated information, if any, will be forwarded to the RCMP NMCS – National Missing Children’s Services for dissemination as and when received.
- 4.8 If a photograph of the victim is available, the Duty NCO will consult with the RCMP Divisional Amber Alert Activation Team and arrangements will be made to have the photo scanned electronically.
- 4.9 When additional staff members are in place and the Department is in a position to receive non-emergency Amber Alert related calls, the RCMP Divisional Amber Alert Activation Team will be notified.

### **Cancellation Criteria**

- 4.10 One or more of the following criteria must exist before canceling an Amber Alert:
- a) the victim is recovered;
  - b) the abductor and the victim have left the Lower Mainland;

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- c) twenty-four hours have passed since the Amber Alert was activated; or
- d) the Duty NCO, in consultation with the Department Officer who authorized the Amber Alert, for any reason believes that cancellation is appropriate.

4.11 An Amber Alert may be cancelled only by the Authorized Officer and only when the cancellation criteria exist.

### **Cancellation Procedures**

4.12 When the decision has been made to cancel the Amber Alert, the Duty NCO will cause the following protocol to be followed:

- a) a CPIC fan-out canceling the Amber Alert will be sent to all surrounding agencies and to E-COMM; and
- b) the Duty NCO will notify the RCMP Divisional Amber Alert Activation Team by telephone at 1-888-542-6237 or 1-888-54AMBER, that the Amber Alert has been cancelled.

### **Responsibilities – Media Relations Officer**

4.13 The Media Relations Officer will field all inquiries from the media, and may refer specific inquiries about the Amber Alert Program to official Amber Alert spokespersons.

### **Amber Alert Review**

4.14 Following any activation by the Department of an Amber Alert, the Authorized Officer will:

- a) convene a debriefing to review the handling of the case and the effectiveness of the Amber Alert protocol and to determine whether any adjustments are warranted; and
- b) attend any meeting convened by The Amber Alert Society of British Columbia to review the effectiveness of the Amber Alert protocol.

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