



# NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS MANUAL

## CHAPTER: 41.23

### TITLE: MISSING PERSON REPORTING AND PUBLIC ALERTS

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#### PURPOSE

This Chapter describes the procedure for investigating and alerting the public regarding missing persons.

#### DEFINITIONS:

**AMBER Alert** or a **Child Abduction Emergency**—A child abduction alert system. **AMBER** is officially a contrived acronym for **America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response**. The decision to declare an AMBER Alert is made by each police organization that investigates each of the abductions. Public information in an AMBER Alert usually consists of the name and description of the abductee, a description of the suspected abductor, and a description and license plate number of the abductor's vehicle, if available. In Louisiana, only the Louisiana State Police issue AMBER Alerts when requested by law enforcement agencies and once the LSP has determined that the request meets the requirements.

**Developmental Disability**—A severe chronic disability that can be cognitive or physical or both. Developmental disabilities appear before the age of 22 and are likely to be lifelong. Some developmental disabilities are largely physical issues, such as cerebral palsy or epilepsy. Some individuals may have a condition that includes a physical and intellectual disability, for example Down syndrome or fetal alcohol syndrome. Refer to La. R.S. 28:451.2(11) for the state definition.

**Emergency Alert System (EAS)**—A national public warning system that requires broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service (SDARS) providers, and direct broadcast satellite (DBS) providers to provide the communications capability to the President to address the American public during a national emergency. The system also may be used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information, such as AMBER alerts and weather information targeted to specific areas. The EAS regulations and standards are governed by the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau of the FCC. EAS has become part of [Integrated Public Alert and Warning System](#) (IPAWS), a program of FEMA.

**Level I Alert**-- Missing children under 17 or adults 65 and older meeting the criteria for an Amber or Silver Alert, or cases involving imminent danger or suspicious circumstances.

**Level II Alert**-- Missing individuals 17 to 65 years old with known physical or mental disabilities.

These cases will be handled in coordination with LSP under the Endangered or Critical Missing protocol.

**Missing Child**—Any individual under the age of eighteen years, whose temporary or permanent residence is in Louisiana, whose location has not been determined and who has been reported missing to a federal or state law enforcement agency (La. R.S. 46:1431).

**Missing Person**—Any Louisiana resident who has been reported missing to local or state law enforcement agencies.

**Missing Senior Citizen**—A person whose whereabouts are unknown, whose domicile at the time he/she is reported missing is in this state, who is 60 years of age or older and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to his/her safety and health.

**Missing Vulnerable Person** – A missing person regardless of age with cognitive, developmental, mental, emotional, physical, or age-related impairments whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the safety or health of themselves or others

**NOLA Ready Alert System** – a 24/7 City of New Orleans, New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness system for notifications which can be used for missing children, seniors, and vulnerable adults, including those not covered by the existing AMBER or Silver Alert programs.

**Silver Alert**—A public notification system to broadcast information about missing persons, especially seniors with Alzheimer's Disease, dementia, or other mental disabilities to aid in their return.

## INITIAL RESPONSE

1. All members shall accept any report, including any telephone report, of a missing person, including runaways, without delay. A missing person report shall be accepted regardless of jurisdiction.
2. District officers should handle the initial missing person call for service and conduct a preliminary investigation. Department members shall promptly assist any person who is attempting to make a report of a missing person or runaway.
3. OPCD shall be made aware of any reports of a missing person received by members of the NOPD without delay.
4. The investigating officer shall make inquiries concerning the missing person and make an assessment of reasonable steps that can be taken to locate the person. The initial investigation should include:
  - (a) Interviewing the persons who made the initial report, and if the person is a child, contact and interview the child's parent or guardian.
  - (b) Determining when, where and by whom the missing person was last seen.
  - (c) Interviewing the individual who last had contact with the missing person.
  - (d) Obtaining a detailed description of the missing person, abductor, vehicles and other pertinent information.
5. The initial investigating officer shall make an assessment if the missing person is a "missing vulnerable person" or if foul play is suspected. If so, the Special Victims Division shall be contacted immediately through Communications Services. SVD shall provide guidance on the conduct of or assume the investigation.
6. Members of the New Orleans Police Department should notify their supervisor and

the District investigative unit as soon as possible upon learning of a situation where public notification, a warning or enlisting the help of the media and public could assist in locating a missing person, apprehending a dangerous person or gathering information.

7. No alerts shall be sent without the prior approval of the Special Victims Division.

## INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

8. The missing person report shall contain at a minimum:
  - (a) The name of the reporting person;
  - (b) The relationship of the reporting person to the missing person;
  - (c) The name, age, address and all identifying characteristics of the missing person;
  - (d) The length of time the person has been missing; and
  - (e) Other information deemed relevant.
9. If an initial investigation reveals that a person appears to be missing, and it does not fit the criteria set by SVD for them to assume the case, further actions may be necessary. The investigating officer should determine from the information available whether a physical search is appropriate. If it appears from the situation that the missing person's safety may be endangered or there are missing children, each of the following actions should be performed:
  - (a) If a search is warranted, conduct a search of the home, building or other area/location where the incident took place and conduct a search including all surrounding areas. Obtain consent or a search warrant if necessary.
  - (b) If a search is not warranted or does not locate the missing person, additional investigation may be required, including:
    - A neighborhood/vehicle canvas.
    - Identifying persons at the scene and conducting separate interviews.
    - Documenting actions, telephone communications and other activities.
    - Assigning a District investigator or officers whose duties will include coordination of the investigation.
    - Involvement of the media if approved by SVD and coordinated through PIO.
    - If the missing person is under 13 years of age or there is evidence the person is missing under suspicious circumstances, Communications Services shall broadcast over the radio or send a mobile computer "be-on-the-lookout" (**BOLO**) transmission without delay within this jurisdiction.
10. Department members may assist other agencies, including federal agencies, in the investigation of any person who was last seen in this jurisdiction.
11. During missing person investigations, the primary investigator shall attempt to obtain the most recent color photograph available of the missing person. The photograph and all pertinent information concerning the missing person shall be forwarded to the Louisiana Repository for Unidentified and Missing Persons and the Orleans Parish Coroner's Office. These photographs may be used for public information bulletins without written authorization.
12. For all reports involving a missing child, department members should request that a member of the family or next of kin authorize the release of the medical and dental records of the missing child for analysis by the Louisiana Repository for Unidentified and Missing Persons.

**INVESTIGATION OF MISSING SENIOR CITIZENS AND MISSING ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

13. If it is determined the person is a missing senior citizen or a missing adult with developmental disabilities, the handling officer shall immediately:
- (a) Ensure that identifying and descriptive information about the person and involved suspects and vehicles are broadcast regionally, statewide, and nationally. Activate protocols for working with the media including Level I or Level II Alerts as appropriate.
  - (b) Consult with the Louisiana State Police and request assistance as necessary.
  - (c) Secure the crime scene and/or last known position of the missing person and, if not already completed, attempt to identify and interview persons in the area at the time of the incident.
  - (d) Implement multijurisdictional coordination and mutual aid plans when necessary. Factors to consider include:
    - i. Inadequate department resources.
    - ii. The investigation crosses jurisdictional lines.
    - iii. Existence of pre-established task forces or investigative teams.
  - (e) Obtain and protect uncontaminated missing person scent articles for possible use by search canines.

**INVESTIGATION OF A MISSING CHILD**

14. Upon receiving and investigating a report of a missing child, the New Orleans Police Department shall enter the information within two hours into the Louisiana Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children (LACMEC)/National Crime Information Center (NCIC) missing person databases (42 USC 5780(3); RS 40:2521).
15. In conducting an investigation of a missing child, the New Orleans Police Department shall:
- (a) Conduct a preliminary investigation and classify the cause of the disappearance of the child as runaway, abduction by parent, abduction by a stranger or cause of disappearance unknown and shall:
    - Immediately notify such persons and make such inquiries concerning the missing child as necessary.
    - Utilize a family liaison to maintain communication with the family of the missing child.
    - Fully comply with the requirements of the National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990, Title XXXVII of Public Law 101-647, 104 Stat. 4966.
    - Enter into the LACMEC/NCIC Missing Person File database, as miscellaneous information, any person reasonably believed to have unlawfully abducted or detained the missing child or aided or abetted the unlawful abduction or detention.
    - Verify and update original LACMEC/NCIC entries with any additional information within 30-60 days of entry.
    - Enter into the LACCH/NCIC Wanted Person File any warrant information for the arrest of a person suspected in the child's disappearance or concealment, including identifying and descriptive information concerning:
      - The suspect.
      - As miscellaneous information, the missing child.
    - Determine whether the circumstances regarding the missing child meet the criteria for Level I or Level II Alert activation
  - (b) Cross-reference and integrate all information into the LACMEC/NCIC Missing

Person File.

- (c) The Department may notify, as soon as appropriate, the school in which the missing child is or was most recently enrolled or the parish school superintendent if the child was being instructed at home, that the child is the subject of a missing child report and that the child's school records are to be flagged in case the child reappears within the state.
- (d) The Department may contact the state registrar in the state of the child's birth to flag the child as missing on his/her birth certificate.
- (e) Inform family members of the missing child of the status of the investigation (La. R.S. 46:1844(P)).
- (f) When a missing child has not been located within 30 days after a report is filed, the assigned investigator shall:
  - Confirm authorization for consent to obtain dental and medical records.
  - Send to the child's parent or guardian a request for certain identifying information regarding the child that the NCIC recommends to be provided.
  - Request the child's parent or guardian to provide such identifying information regarding the child.
  - Upon receipt of the medical or dental records, enter the information into the LACMEC and NCIC database.
- (g) Upon notice by a parent or guardian that a child reported as missing has been found or returned, an officer should conduct a recovery interview to verify that the child has returned and provide referrals to minimize the potential for reoccurrence. The Department shall enter the updated information into the LACMEC and NCIC database and shall inform any school that was notified that the minor is no longer a missing child.

### **CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION/MANAGEMENT**

- 16. If a crime scene is identified, it should be secured and a command post or operation base placed into operation a reasonable distance from the crime scene. The supervisor designed as the Incident Commander shall ensure the following persons (if needed) are identified:
  - (a) Public Information Officer
  - (b) Search coordinator
  - (c) Investigative Coordinator
  - (d) Support Unit Coordinator
- 17. The Incident Commander shall designate two liaison officers (one at the command post and one at the home of the missing person). The role of the liaison at the home will include facilitating information sharing, support, and advocacy for the family.
- 18. The investigator of the crime should consider various elements, including:
  - (a) Establishing the ability to trap and trace all incoming calls. Consider setting up a separate telephone line or cellular telephone for Department use and follow up on all leads.
  - (b) Compilation of a list of known sex offenders in the region.
  - (c) In cases of infant abduction, investigate claims of home births made in the area.
  - (d) In cases involving children, obtain child protective agency records for reports of child abuse.

**INVESTIGATIVE RESOURCES AND INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION**

19. Additional support, investigative and outside agency assistance should be requested as reasonably necessary. All members and outside agencies providing assistance should be properly briefed and updated on the investigation status.
20. If outside agency assistance is requested, the primary investigator should coordinate with SVD regarding the outside agency assistance.
21. SVD shall determine if it is necessary to use the International Justice and Public Safety Network (NLETS), the AMBER Alert network and the Silver Alert program to alert state, regional and federal law enforcement agencies.
22. Resources that should also be considered in the investigation of a missing person case include, but are not limited to:
  - (a) Local FBI office
  - (b) Local Medical Examiner
  - (c) National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), [www.namus.gov](http://www.namus.gov)
  - (d) Louisiana Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children, 1-800-434-8007.
  - (e) National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com), 800-THE-LOST, including Project ALERT (America's Law Enforcement Retiree Team) and Team Adam
  - (f) Any other agencies and/or resources that may be available to assist in the investigation of the case.

**PUBLIC ALERT CRITERIA**

23. The use of any alerts (i.e. AMBER, Silver, NOLA Ready) shall be determined by, and coordinated through the Special Victims Division only.
24. SVD should ensure sensitive data and the privacy of missing individuals, and their families are reasonably safeguarded during any public alerts.

**AMBER ALERTS**

25. The activation criteria for a Louisiana AMBER Alert require that:
  - (a) A law enforcement officer / agency confirms a child under 17 years of age has been abducted.
  - (b) A law enforcement officer / agency believes the circumstances surrounding the abduction indicate that the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
  - (c) There is sufficient descriptive information about the child, abductor, and/or suspect's vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help the case
26. The investigating officer will supply SVD with all pertinent information substantiating the need for an Amber Alert. If the SVD detective concurs that the criteria for an Amber Alert are met, they shall:
  - (a) Immediately notify the Commander of the Special Victims Division who shall in turn authorize an Amber Alert;
  - (b) Determine if the message should be regional or if various states should be included in the notification.
  - (c) Notify the PIO that an alert has been authorized, requesting he/she respond to the scene;
  - (d) Contact the Communications Services NOPD Liaison, supplying all information for the Amber Alert system initial reporting form; and
  - (e) Respond to the scene to take command of the investigation.
27. The investigator or their designee must:

- (a) Complete the Louisiana Amber Alert System Initial Reporting Form (available at <http://www.lsp.org/pdf/AmberAlert.pdf>), providing as much information as possible,
- (b) Sign the document, and
- (c) Electronically mail the form with a photograph, if available, of the missing person to:

- **EMAIL:** [amberalert@dps.state.la.us](mailto:amberalert@dps.state.la.us)

- 28. If a photograph is not sent with the Initial Reporting Form, one should be sent as soon as possible.
- 29. If the circumstances do not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert to activate the statewide EAS, the LSP may offer an alternate form of mass notification, including:
  - (a) An email alerting news media and law enforcement of a child's disappearance which does not meet the criteria of an AMBER Alert EAS activation. The email will include a statement that this department is requesting distribution of the information although it does not meet the criteria for AMBER Alert EAS activation.
  - (b) Requesting completion and submission of the Louisiana Level II Media Advisory Form (available at <http://www.lsp.org/pdf/AmberLevel2.pdf>).
- 30. Should information and evidence arise in an incident that does not initially meet the criteria for Amber Alert activation, the LSP should be immediately provided that information and asked to reconsider an Amber Alert activation of the EAS.

#### SILVER ALERTS

- 31. The activation criteria for a Louisiana Silver Alert require that a law enforcement officer / agency confirms the missing adult is either:
  - a) **"Missing person with developmental disabilities"** (a person whose whereabouts are unknown; whose domicile at the time he is reported missing is in this state; and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the safety and health of himself, as determined by a local law enforcement agency), OR
  - b) **"Missing Senior Citizen"** (a person whose whereabouts are unknown; whose domicile at the time he is reported missing is in this state; whose age at the time he is first reported missing is 60 years of age or older; and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the safety and health of himself, as determined by a local law enforcement agency).

#### NOLA READY ALERT CRITERIA

- 32. The NOLA Ready Alert System should be used in circumstances in which:
  - (a) The subject is a missing child, senior, or vulnerable adult as defined by the Chapter;
  - (b) The missing individual's whereabouts are unknown, and the disappearance occurred in Orleans Parish, or the individual is believed to be located in Orleans Parish.
  - (c) Circumstances exist creating a credible threat to the missing individual's safety or health;
  - (d) Sufficient information is available for dissemination to the public that could assist in locating the missing individual; and
  - (e) The situation does not meet AMBER Alert or Silver Alert criteria.
- 33. The use of the NOLA Ready Alert System is only for those cases that do not meet AMBER or Silver Alert criteria and is not to be used in lieu of those alerts when the criteria are met.

34. Minimum NOLA Ready Alert content may include, as available:
- (a) A photo
  - (b) Identifying details such as;
    - Name
    - Age
    - Sex
    - Height
    - Weight
    - Eye color
    - Hair color
    - Distinguishing marks such as tattoos or birthmarks
    - Aliases or nicknames
    - Vehicle or persons of interest
    - Last known location / date / time
    - Date/ time the individual was reported missing
    - Circumstances of disappearance
    - Medical or safety considerations
    - NOPD contact information
    - Clear instructions for providing tips
    - Any other information relevant to the circumstances of disappearance.

**Note: An official website link may be incorporated into the alert as a supplemental resource for more comprehensive information and ongoing updates.**

35. NOLA Ready Alerts should be cancelled through coordination with SVD once the person is located, there is no longer a threat to the individual or others, or when the investigation determines alerts would no longer aid the investigation.
36. The Critically Missing/Endangered Persons Notification Form (**Appendix A**) should be completed by the investigator when directed by the Special Victims Division when requesting a NOLA Ready Alert for a critically missing or endangered person. SVD shall be responsible for making the request and providing the information to be sent to PIO and Nola Ready.

#### **PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION – PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (PIO)**

37. The Public Affairs Division on-duty Public Information Officer shall be notified when a Level I or Level II Alert is requested through SVD.
38. The PIO will coordinate with SVD and NOLA READY to provide updated information and photographs of the missing individual to media outlets including social media and emergency alert systems.
39. Within five working days of an Amber Alert, the Communications Director shall request a meeting with the Special Victims Division Commander and representatives from the media to evaluate the operation of the Amber Alert, with the goal of improving future Public Alerts.

#### **TRAINING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

40. All members of the Department shall be provided updated training on this Chapter annually.
41. NOPD shall submit an annual report regarding public alert activations to the Clerk of Council on or before March 1<sup>st</sup> which summarizes:
- (a) Activations,

- (b) Time-to-activation,
- (c) Recovery outcomes
- (d) Demographic and geographic data,
- (e) Community engagement,
- (f) Trainings,
- (g) An equity evaluation of activations and outcomes, and
- (h) Any recommendations for improvement.

**Appendix A – Critically Missing/Endangered Persons Notification Form**

**New Orleans Police Department  
I.S.B/ Special Victims Division  
Critically Missing /Endangered Persons Notification**

**THIS DOCUMENT MUST BE COMPLETED BY DISTRICT DIU**

**LEVEL II**  
Endangered / Missing  
Child Advisory



**LOCAL ALERT**  
(Vasquez's Call)

Date/ Time This form was completed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Current NOPD Item: \_\_\_\_\_ Police Signal: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 1- ID/DATE/TIME/LOCATION**

Full name of critically missing or endangered child/adult:

\_\_\_\_\_

City/ Community/Parish where child /adult last seen: \_\_\_\_\_

Day/Day last seen: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time discovered missing: \_\_\_\_\_

Exact address/location last seen: \_\_\_\_\_

Known landmarks at or near location missing from: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Last Known direction of travel: \_\_\_\_\_

Circumstances surrounding disappearance or pertinent case information:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 2- CRITICALLY MISSING or ENDANGERED CHILD /ADULT’s PERSONAL INFORMATION & DESCRIPTION**

\*Current digital photo attached? **Y** or **N** \*Approximate age of photo: \_\_\_\_\_

Race/ Ethnicity of Child / Adult: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex of Child / Adult: \_\_\_\_\_

Child / Adult’s DOB, Age, Height & Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of clothing Child / Adult last seen wearing, include any personal items in his/her possessions:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description of any associated vehicle:

Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Color: \_\_\_\_\_ Make: \_\_\_\_\_ Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Unique Characteristics of the vehicle: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 3- THREAT OF IMMINENT DANGER TO CRITICALLY MISSING or ENDANGERED CHILD /ADULT**

Is the Child/ Adult believed to be in imminent danger? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is this believed to be an abduction? \_\_\_\_\_ **Domestic Violence involved?** \_\_\_\_\_

What evidence exists that the Child/ Adult was abducted?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 3- THREAT OF IMMINENT DANGER TO CRITICALLY MISSING or ENDANGERED CHILD /ADULT**

Name and DOB of any suspect(s) in disappearance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Description of any suspect(s) in disappearance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is there evidence to indicate the abductor would cause serious injury or death to the Child/ Adult?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any known emergent medical issues/ diagnosis/ medications involving Child / Adult?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any known physical/ mental impairments involving Child / Adult? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 4- SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

Name of Detective requesting the alert: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Rank/ Unit # of Supervisor approving the alert:

\_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*\*\*For ISB/ Special Victims Division Personnel Only\*\*\*\*\***

Missing Person Affidavit Submitted? \_\_\_\_\_ NOPDPIO Notified? \_\_\_\_\_

NCIC Notified? \_\_\_\_\_ Name/ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Missing Bulletin \_\_\_\_\_ Cancellation Bulletin # \_\_\_\_\_

L.S.P. Notified? \_\_\_\_\_ Name/ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

D.C.F.S Notified? \_\_\_\_\_ Report # \_\_\_\_\_ Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_