

Public Alerts

307.1 VERSION

Review Date	Effective Date	Approving Authority
06/29/2021	07/09/18	Gabriel Camacho, Interim Chief of Police

307.2 POLICY AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for alerting the public to important information and soliciting public aid when appropriate.

307.3 ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

307.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

307.4.1 EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees of the Harrisonburg Police Department should notify their supervisors, Patrol Commander or Criminal Investigation Division supervisor as soon as practicable upon learning of a situation where public notification, a warning or enlisting the help of the media and the public could assist in locating a missing person, apprehending a dangerous person or gathering information.

307.4.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A supervisor apprised of the need for a public alert is responsible for making the appropriate notifications based upon the circumstances of each situation. The supervisor shall promptly notify the Chief of Police, the appropriate Commander and the Public Information Officer when any public alert is generated.

The supervisor in charge of the investigation to which the alert relates is responsible for:

- (a) Updating alerts.
- (b) Canceling alerts.
- (c) Ensuring all appropriate reports are completed.
- (d) Preparing an after-action evaluation of the investigation to be forwarded to the appropriate Commander.

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307.5 AMBER ALERTS™

AMBER Alerts™ are used to provide a statewide system for the rapid dissemination of information regarding abducted children.

307.5.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are utilized to determine if an AMBER Alert should be requested (Va. Code § 52-34.3):

- (a) The victim of the abduction is a child less than 18 years of age or currently enrolled in a secondary school in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- (b) An officer has a reasonable belief that an abduction has occurred.
- (c) An officer believes that the victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.
- (d) Sufficient information exists about the victim and the suspect for this department to request that the Virginia State Police (VSP) issue an AMBER Alert.
- (e) The child must be entered into the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) missing person files as soon as practical.

307.5.2 PROCEDURE

Employees initiating an AMBER Alert shall (Va. Code § 52-34.3):

- (a) Notify all on-duty officers of the existence of a missing child report.
- (b) Ensure that the missing child is entered into the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) missing person files as soon as practicable.
- (c) Transmit the report to the VSP Administrative Headquarters to request activation of the AMBER Alert system using the approved form.
- (d) Confer with the VSP to determine whether the alert should be local, regional or statewide.
- (e) Immediately notify the VSP if the missing child is located.

307.6 BLUE ALERTS™

Blue Alerts™ are used to provide a statewide system for the rapid dissemination of information regarding a violent criminal who has seriously injured or killed a local, state or federal law enforcement officer. A Blue Alert can also be activated when a law enforcement officer is missing in the line of duty under circumstances that cause concern for his/her safety (Va. Code § 52-34.8).

307.6.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are utilized to determine if a Blue Alert should be requested (Va. Code § 52-34.8; Va. Code § 52-34.9):

- (a) A law enforcement officer has been killed or seriously injured while in the line of duty.

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- (b) The suspect has not been apprehended and may be a serious threat to the public or other law enforcement personnel.
- (c) Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the suspect.
- (d) If a law enforcement officer is missing in the line of duty, sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the law enforcement officer.

307.6.2 PROCEDURE

Employees initiating a Blue Alert shall (Va. Code § 52-34.9):

- (a) Verify that the criteria for activating the Blue Alert has been met.
- (b) Notify the VSP and request activation of a Blue Alert.
- (c) Immediately notify the VSP if the suspect or the missing law enforcement officer is located.

307.7 SENIOR ALERTS

Senior Alerts are used to provide a statewide system for the rapid dissemination of information regarding a missing senior adult who is over 60 years of age and suffers a cognitive impairment to the extent that he/she is unable to provide care for him/herself without assistance from a caregiver, including a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or dementia, and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to his/her health and safety as determined by this department or the VSP (Va. Code § 52-34.4; Va. Code § 52-34.5).

307.7.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are utilized to determine if a Senior Alert should be requested (Va. Code § 52-34.6):

- (a) An officer believes that a missing senior adult's whereabouts are unknown.
- (b) An officer believes that the missing senior adult is at risk of injury or death.
- (c) The Harrisonburg Police Department confirms that an investigation has taken place verifying the disappearance and eliminating alternative explanations for the missing senior adult's disappearance.
- (d) Sufficient information regarding the missing senior adult is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the missing senior adult.

307.7.2 PROCEDURE

Employees initiating a Senior Alert shall (Va. Code § 52-34.6):

- (a) Complete the Virginia Senior Alert forms and forward to the VSP.
- (b) Confer with the VSP to determine whether the alert should be local, regional or statewide.
- (c) Forward the most current photograph of the missing senior adult to the VSP.

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- (d) Notify the VSP by telephone and confirm receipt of the forms. The VSP will contact any broadcast companies to activate the Senior Alert.
- (e) Enter the missing senior adult into the VCIN and NCIC missing person files as soon as practicable.
- (f) Immediately notify the VSP if the missing senior adult is located.

307.8 CRITICALLY MISSING ADULT ALERTS

Critically Missing Adult Alerts are used to provide a system for the rapid dissemination of information regarding missing adults believed to have been abducted and in imminent danger (Va. Code § 52-34.10, et seq.).

307.8.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are utilized to determine if a Critically Missing Adult Alert should be requested (Va. Code § 52-34.10):

- (a) There is reason to believe the adult has been abducted.
- (b) There is reason to believe the adult is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death.
- (c) An investigation has been conducted that verified the abduction or eliminated alternative explanations.
- (d) There is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the missing adult, suspect, or the suspect's vehicle.

307.8.2 PROCEDURE

Members initiating a Critically Missing Adult Alert shall (Va. Code § 52-34.12):

- (a) Contact the Virginia State Police to determine whether a local, regional, or statewide alert is appropriate and provide any information that may assist in the safe recovery of the critically missing adult.
- (b) Complete the Virginia Critically Missing Adult Alert forms and forward to the VSP.
- (c) Enter the abducted adult into the Virginia Criminal Information Network and the National Crime Information Center.
- (d) Follow the procedures established by the VSP for issuing the alert.

307.9 MISSING PERSON WITH AUTISM ALERTS

A Missing Person with Autism Alert is used to provide a system for the rapid dissemination of information regarding a missing person with autism whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the person's health and safety as determined by this department or the VSP (Va. Code § 52-34.13, et seq.).

307.9.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are utilized to determine if a Missing Person with Autism Alert should be requested (Va. Code § 52-34.13, et seq.):

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- (a) There is reason to believe that the whereabouts of a person are unknown.
- (b) The person has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder as defined in Va. Code § 38.2-3418.17.
- (c) There is a credible threat to the health and safety of the person as determined by the Department or other circumstances deemed appropriate by the VSP are satisfied.
- (d) An investigation has been conducted that verified the disappearance or eliminated alternative explanations.
- (e) There is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the missing person.

307.9.2 PROCEDURE

Any officer initiating a Missing Person with Autism Alert shall (Va. Code § 52-34.15):

- (a) Contact the VSP to determine whether a local, regional, or statewide alert is appropriate and provide any information that may assist in the safe recovery of the missing person with autism.
- (b) Complete all required forms.
- (c) Enter the missing person into the Virginia Criminal Information Network and the National Crime Information Center.
- (d) Follow the procedures established by the VSP for issuing the alert.