

THE AMBER ADVOCATE

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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AMBER ALERTS IN DANGER?

PROPOSED FCC CHANGES MAY HURT REACH OF AMBER ALERTS

A proposed auction of the broadcast spectrum may impact the reach of AMBER Alerts in several Western states. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is auctioning part of the spectrum used by television stations and some broadcasters fear the change will hurt rural residents from getting AMBER Alerts.

“We are concerned this will hurt thousands of people who receive free over-the-air TV,” said Utah Broadcasters Association President Michele Zabriskie. “We want to make sure they are still able to receive emergency messages, including AMBER Alerts, and help bring abducted kids back home.”

On February 22, 2012, the FCC received authorization from Congress to auction spectrum made available by television stations voluntarily for wireless or broadband use. The TV stations will get a share of the proceeds from the auction. Large companies, such as AT&T and Verizon, will likely pay sizable amounts of money to buy the spectrum.

“It will be a groundbreaking event for the broadcast television, mobile wireless and technology sectors of our economy,” said the FCC in a statement. “The auction presents a significant financial opportunity for many broadcasters, and we expect it to enhance the ability of broadcasters who remain on the air to continue providing the public with diverse, local, free over-the-air television service.”

Western states such as Utah, New Mexico and Montana have developed significant translator systems to carry over-the-air television signals to rural, often mountainous, portions of their states where it is not feasible to provide cable service.

Utah has 756 such translators that cover 25 of the state’s 29 counties. Approximately 250,000 Utah homes, about 20% of the population, receive TV free over-the-air.

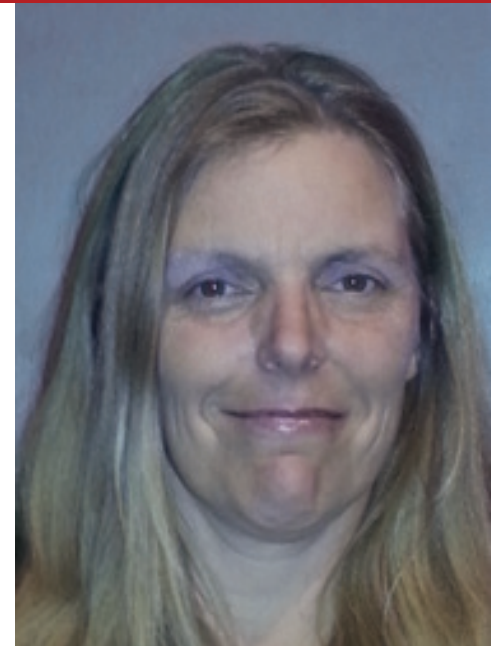
“The FCC is looking at moving all over-the-air television broadcasting to Channel 31 or below,” said Zabriskie. “If that happens, the translator system in Utah will be out of business as it now operates, because all translators are on channels higher than 31.”

“We are concerned this will hurt thousands of people who receive free over-the-air TV.”

*Utah Broadcasters Association President
Michele Zabriskie*

Once the auction is completed, a “repacking” process will likely be used to reposition some television stations to different spectrum locations. However, it is unclear whether the translators will still function.

Zabriskie and other broadcasters in the Western States are urging FCC and Congress to make sure the translators still function after the auction and repacking is completed. ☺



AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

PROFILE: WISCONSIN HAS A VETERAN LOOKING OUT FOR MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN



Susan Whitehorse could hardly contain the good news. She just found out DNA tests had confirmed a Native American mother had found her missing daughter after a 30 year search. Whitehorse is the Wisconsin Missing Persons Clearinghouse Coordinator and AMBER Alert Coordinator and met the woman a few months earlier at a training event concerning exploited children in Indian Country.

“This mother talked to me about all the pain and sorrow she suffered because she did not know what happened to her daughter or if she was alive or dead,” said Whitehorse. “She said no one wanted to listen to hear her voice.”

Whitehorse started working with different agencies and found a woman who was living in Utah. The Native American woman’s daughter was just two years old when she was taken to Mexico by her biological father. She eventually moved back to the U.S. but never stopped looking for her mother. Now that their DNA has been matched, a reunion is being planned for the mother, daughter and two granddaughters.

“We can get a lot more done than we could 30 years ago,” said Whitehorse.

This missing person case is a good example of what Whitehorse has been doing for about 35 years with the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

Wisconsin has had 23 AMBER Alert activations with the safe recovery of 31 children. Whitehorse said training, developing a CART Program, knowing AMBER Alert coordinators in surrounding states, and the great partnership with all Wisconsin stakeholders ensures their AMBER Alert Plan is the most effective and efficient response to a child abduction.

Technology has also played a significant role in keeping Wisconsin’s AMBER Alert Plan viable. The state uses the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network (WCAN), a web-based system which allows law enforcement agencies to send out AMBER Alerts and missing/endangered person advisories via



Susan Whitehorse received the FBI’s Directors Community Leadership award in 2009

email, cell phone text and fax. The system gives law enforcement the ability to send out a WCAN alert while waiting for an AMBER Alert to be approved.

Wisconsin is also one of 13 Midwestern states that participates in the Inter-State Enforcement Agencies to Recover Children (I-SEARCH), a network designed to aid in the identification and recovery of missing, exploited children, runaways, and human trafficking victims.

“There is a connection between human trafficking and the AMBER Alert,” said Whitehorse. She said more training is needed to identify child trafficking victims---especially children from tribal

communities. “Native youth are impacted by threats that affect their physical and emotional well-being at a rate many times higher than that of non-native youth,” she said.

Whitehorse said her work is also inspired by meeting with victim’s families. Many family members have sent her personal notes of thanks for her compassion and care during their times of crisis.

Whitehorse is married and has a son and daughter who remind her that all children are precious. “My children are my life,” she said. “I have been so very blessed.” ☺

Susan Whitehorse:

1999: Appointed Missing Persons Clearinghouse Coordinator.

2003: Set up the Wisconsin AMBER Alert Plan and named state AMBER Alert Coordinator. Wisconsin has had 23 activations with 31 children safely recovered.

2007: U.S. Department of Justice recognized her as Missing Child State Clearinghouse Coordinator of the Year.

2009: FBI honored her with a Community Leadership Award.

2010: Helped create Wisconsin Child Abduction Response Team.

2010: Joined U.S. Attorney’s Human Trafficking Task Force.



ON THE FRONT LINES

OHIO AMBER ALERT PROMPTS CITIZENS TO TAKE ACTION

Les Brock and his friend Willie Schwinn were sitting down for breakfast at a restaurant in Huron, Ohio when they looked out the window and saw the car wanted in an AMBER Alert. The alert was issued July 1 and showed up on Brock's cellphone a few hours earlier at 5:30 a.m. The two construction workers decided to use an acronym to remember the suspect's license plate.

Earlier that morning the Cleveland, Ohio Police Department received a call that a non-custodial father had taken his eight-year-old son from a family member. The suspect, Kevin Criss, had a protective order to stay away from his son.

"It met all the AMBER Alert criteria," said Ohio State Patrol Captain and Ohio AMBER Alert Coordinator Rob Jackson. "Everything about the alert worked correctly."

The alert prompted Brock and Schwinn to start following the suspect and call 911. The suspect was apprehended by law enforcement officers at 9:30 a.m. The child was safely returned to his mother.

"The child is abducted and I'm gonna do whatever I can," Brock told a reporter. "Neither one of us have kids; so we were following that guy to the end."

Jackson is grateful these two men went to such extraordinary measures to respond to the alert. "It was fantastic," he said. "The alert did everything it was designed to do."

This AMBER Alert was significant because Ohio issued the alert during early morning hours with the new Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system. The state had just recently approved using WEA 24-hours a day, whenever an alert was issued.

In April, the Ohio AMBER Alert Committee met with representatives of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and decided to use WEA for AMBER Alerts during all hours. Despite recommendations to not use WEA during early hours, committee members said children are abducted 24 hours a day so the alerts should go out 24 hours a day.

Jackson said this alert is a good example and proof that the committee made the right decision for Ohio and efforts to educate the public about the alerts paid off. "WEA reaches people who are not reached any other way," he said. "WEA was the key to success in this alert because it allows the maximum number of people who are available to find the suspect." ☺



Ohio State Police Captain
Rob Jackson



Suspect: Kevin Criss



Willie Schwinn and Lee
Brock

AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL: MEXICO AND U.S. WORK TOGETHER TO STOP CHILD ABDUCTIONS



The border town of Laredo, Texas was the site of a major training event for Mexican and U.S. law enforcement officials hoping to stop human trafficking and child abductions. On July 9 and 10, more than 70 local, state, and federal law enforcement and victim advocate representatives from U.S. and Mexico met to discuss efforts to protect children.

The agenda included discussions about efforts in Mexico to find missing and abducted children, border security and human trafficking and an exercise involving the recovery of an abducted child.

“All participants cited the need for continued collaboration and the value of actually working closely with their counterpart from the neighboring country,” said Phil Keith, Program Director of the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program.

The training was part of the Southern Border Initiative, a U.S. Department of Justice program aimed at stopping child abductions, child exploitation and trafficking on the southern border of the U.S.

“The reality is the majority of juveniles who are trafficked in the U.S. are trafficked domestically,” said Jim Walters, Southern Border AMBER Alert Liaison. “They are U.S. citizens or have dual citizenship in Mexico. Somebody lures them in or forces them into being exploited.”

Mexico has launched an AMBER Alert program similar to the U.S. system and is now using social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to increase the number of people looking for an abducted child.

“The participants worked well and identified strengths and weaknesses on both sides,” concluded Keith. ☺

ONTARIO FIREFIGHTERS WILL NOW FIGHT CHILD ABDUCTIONS

Ontario, Canada firefighters will now be notified when a child has been abducted. More than 1,500 members of the Ontario Fire Services are now set up to receive AMBER Alerts. The alerts will go to the network of 45 fire stations in the province. ☺

Read more: <http://bit.ly/1a8rFTU>

DUTCH AMBER ALERT RECOVERS CHILD IN GERMANY

An AMBER Alert in the Netherlands helped recover an abducted four-year-old boy who was taken to Germany. The suspect’s car was recognized after the alert went out to the media and social networking sites. This was the second time a Dutch AMBER Alert helped recover a child in another country. ☺

Read more: <http://bit.ly/1bZngkQ>

ODDS & ENDS

SOCIAL MEDIA SPREADS FALSE MISSING GIRL REPORT

Germantown, Tennessee police were swamped with calls about a missing 14-year-old girl who was not actually missing. Numerous people spread the news about the missing teen after reading about it on Facebook and Twitter. Police interviewed family and friends and contacted other law enforcement agencies before the teen showed up and said she was in the neighborhood all day.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/15KGele>



ILLINOIS HAS NEW LAW TARGETING CHILD PREDATORS

Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed a law on August 2 that allows prosecutors to introduce a defendant's past similar convictions as evidence in child abduction cases. For most crimes, past convictions were not admissible during a trial. Supporters say it will allow jurors to consider whether the defendant has a propensity to target children. The law was spurred by a Chicago Tribune investigation that found child predators were rarely caught or received light sentences after repeated convictions.

Read more: <http://trib.in/1c4VCbC>



IOWA CHANGES AMBER ALERT CRITERIA

Iowa has changed the criteria to make it easier to issue an AMBER Alert when all of the information is not available. Authorities now need to have only one of the following descriptions: the abducted child, the suspect or the suspect's vehicle. Before the change the state required all three descriptions before an alert could be issued. The change was made after a review was held of two high-profile kidnapping and murder investigations. The review board also recommended more AMBER Alert training in the state.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/16VTIDG>



NORTH CAROLINA MARKS 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF AMBER ALERT

North Carolina has a 100% safe recovery rate during the state's first decade of the AMBER Alert program. North Carolina has issued 83 alerts after the child abduction response plan was established in 2002. The first AMBER Alert was for a baby girl who was safely found after she was taken in a hijacked car on August 27, 2003.

Read more: <http://on.wfmy.com/121QhLW>



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