



# BROADCASTER GUIDE FOR AMBER ALERTS IN KANSAS

## PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

When a child abduction incident occurs, broadcast media serve as the conduit between law enforcement officials and citizens to make sure AMBER alert information quickly reaches a public audience. The media are vital partners who relay key details that are instrumental in the search for an abducted child.

## HOW AN ALERT BEGINS

When law enforcement believes an abduction has occurred, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) is contacted by a Kansas law enforcement agency. AMBER Alert coordinators with the KBI work with law enforcement officers to determine if the abduction meets the Department of Justice criteria. If all criterion are met, an AMBER alert will be activated. Law enforcement, the media, private sector partners, and the public are then notified that an AMBER alert is active.

## ENSURE KEY STAFF ARE SUBSCRIBED TO NOTIFICATIONS

Typically news directors, assignment editors, digital content managers, and engineers or staff involved with EAS, crawlers and tickers, are subscribed to receive AMBER alert notifications. Sign up on the [Kansas AMBER Website](#).

## DURING THE AMBER ALERT

Key information will be delivered immediately. It will be equal, fair, and concise for all broadcast partners. Please disseminate the alert information and any updates promptly. Be cautious if disseminating additional information that is gathered by news operations without first fact-checking it with law enforcement. Information during an alert is extremely fluid and any confusion by the public could undermine efforts to safely recover the child.





## ANSWERS TO PUBLIC FAQ

### WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR AN AMBER ALERT?

The Department of Justice has outlined the following criteria for an abduction to be considered for an AMBER alert: **1.** There has been a child abduction; **2.** The abducted child is 17 years of age or younger or an individual with a mental or physical disability; **3.** There is reason to believe the victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death; and **4.** There is sufficient information to disseminate to the general public, which could assist in the safe recovery of the victim and/or the apprehension of a suspect

### WHY WAS THERE A DELAY IN ISSUING THE ALERT?

Sometimes the incident is not immediately reported to law enforcement. After responding, law enforcement officers must conduct interviews, gather information, and evaluate the scene before understanding what likely occurred. Once the KBI is contacted it often takes additional time to weigh the facts of the case against the DOJ criteria. After it is determined that an AMBER alert should be issued, it takes employees time to obtain victim and suspect information, victim and suspect photos, key data into the website, record the EAS message, and coordinate the WEA message.

### WHY CAN'T AN AMBER ALERT BE ISSUED FOR ALL MISSING CHILDREN CASES?

In Kansas over 200 children are missing at any given time, and around 4,500 reports of missing juveniles are submitted annually, many of which are repeat runaways. AMBER alerts are not issued in cases where children are believed lost, stranded, injured, or to have run away, but the media may be contacted in these cases using media releases or other tools. Expanding the criteria to encompass additional circumstances for an alert could cause the public to become desensitized when they are issued. It is believed any reduction in public involvement will undermine the effectiveness of the AMBER Alert program.

### WHY DID I NOT RECEIVE AN ALERT ON MY CELL PHONE?

The KBI is able to send a wireless emergency alert (cell phone notification) statewide, or to as few as one county in Kansas. Many times all citizens are not in the chosen alerting area. The alerting area is determined based on the circumstances of the abduction event. Additionally, a person's device must be WEA-capable, switched on, and in the vicinity of and receiving service from a cell tower of a wireless carrier that participates in WEA. Cell phones continually search for a tower that offers optimal service for their location. Occasionally your phone can stay connected to a tower that is counties away from your current location, or in state border areas, connect to a tower across the state line. For this reason, you may not always receive an alert for the area where you are currently located.



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