

## Public Alerts

### 316.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

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

### 316.2 POLICY

Public alerts may be employed using the Emergency Alert System (EAS), local radio, television and press organizations and other groups to notify the public of incidents, or enlist the aid of the public, when the exchange of information may enhance the safety of the community. Various types of alerts may be available based upon each situation and the alert system's individual criteria.

### 316.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 316.3.1 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the Plymouth Township Police Department should notify their supervisors, Patrol Lieutenant or Detective 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.

#### 316.3.2 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 on-duty or on-call Lieutenant 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 Lieutenant.

#### 316.3.3 LIEUTENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

A Lieutenant apprised of a public alert is responsible for notifying the Administrative Lieutenant and/or the Chief of Police, depending on the circumstances of the situation.

### 316.4 AMBER ALERTS™

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

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#### 316.4.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are utilized to determine if an AMBER Alert should be requested:

- (a) The victim of the abduction is a child under 18 years of age.
- (b) An officer has a reason to believe the child is in imminent danger of death or serious injury.
- (c) Other factors should also be considered, including, but not limited to:
  - 1. Known descriptive information of the suspect.
  - 2. The time elapsed since the abduction.
  - 3. Witness reliability.

#### 316.4.2 PROCEDURE

The following is the procedure for initiating an AMBER Alert:

- (a) The assigned officer will respond to the scene and initiate a missing child investigation.
- (b) Upon establishing the facts of the abduction, the officer will determine if the facts fit the criteria for an AMBER Alert.
- (c) If the criteria is met, the officer will notify the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) by phone and through the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network (CLEAN) and provide the appropriate information.

### **316.5 MISSING ENDANGERED PERSON ALERT**

The Missing Endangered Person Alert (MEPA) system provides information about an endangered missing person to the public by use of the local media with distribution to other law enforcement agencies.

#### 316.5.1 CRITERIA

The following criteria are utilized to determine if a MEPA should be issued:

- (a) The incident circumstances do not qualify as an AMBER Alert.
- (b) The person is missing under unexplained, involuntary or suspicious circumstances.
- (c) One of the following factors places the missing person at risk of death or serious injury:
  - 1. Age
  - 2. Health
  - 3. Mental or physical disability
  - 4. Weather or environmental conditions

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- (d) The notification to the public has the potential to assist in the recovery of the missing person.
- (e) Other factors to consider:
  - 1. The quality of the descriptive information
  - 2. The amount of time the person has been missing
  - 3. The reliability of the witness

#### **316.5.2 PROCEDURE**

The following is the procedure for initiating a MEPA:

- (a) The assigned officer will respond to the scene and initiate a missing person investigation.
- (b) Upon establishing the facts of the disappearance of the missing person, the officer will determine if the facts fit the criteria for a MEPA.
- (c) If the criteria are met, then the officer will contact the PSP through the PSP Watch Center and request the MEPA.

#### **316.6 ALERTPA**

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Alert System (AlertPA) is an all-hazards alert tool that may be used to provide notice to the public regarding any active event that poses a risk to the public. When the Plymouth Township Police Department is the lead agency on such an event, the incident commander, or the authorized designee, should consider using the AlertPA system to disseminate the critical information to the public. The AlertPA system is accessible through the AlertPA website.