

BATON ROUGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order
No.282

Effective Date
01-10-2000

Revised Date
09-18-2020

Subject: Missing Persons

Reviewed 9/9/2020

POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to make every effort to assist in the location of missing persons. More aggressive measures will be taken to locate those persons, who by virtue of age or infirmity, are unable to return home and may fall victim to accidents or criminal behavior.

The following procedure details the parameters of investigation in each category of missing person: adult, adult impaired and juvenile. The scope and duration of the investigation and search will be based upon a determination of the level of risk to the individual if he or she is not found. Reporting will be consistent with current NCIC guidelines.

DEFINITIONS

Adult Impaired Missing Persons

Any person age 18 or older who fits one or more of the following criteria will be considered an adult impaired missing person for purposes of this order.

1. Disability - A person who is missing and under proven physical/mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting himself or others to personal and immediate danger.
2. Endangered - A person who is missing and in the company of another person under circumstances indicating that his physical safety is in danger.
3. Involuntary - A person who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance was not voluntary, i.e., abduction or kidnapping.
4. Catastrophe Victim - A person missing after a disaster, i.e., hurricane, airplane crash, explosion.
5. Any person age eighteen (18) and older who does not fall under these categories is considered an adult missing person.

Adult Missing Person

Any person age eighteen (18) and older who is reported missing, but does not fall within the above categories is considered an adult missing person.

Juvenile Missing Person

Any person reported missing under the age of 18 is considered a juvenile missing person despite the time elapsed or circumstances. This includes runaway and ungovernable juveniles.

High Risk Missing Person

A high risk missing person is anyone who, because of extremes in age, mental or physical impairment, criminal victimization, or other circumstances precluding voluntary absence, is absent from his/her place of abode or other place without the knowledge and/or consent of his parent or lawful guardian.

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A high risk missing person may fall into any of the categories mentioned above. Due to their status immediate steps will be taken to locate them or begin the investigation into their disappearance. In determining whether an individual falls into the high risk category officers will be guided by the totality of circumstances, not merely age or physical condition.

Any child under the age of thirteen will be considered a high risk case, including runaways and cases of ungovernable juveniles regardless of their being in custody or at group homes.

Cases of parental kidnapping or any other suspected abduction will be considered a high risk case.

Amber Alert

A process whereby information concerning child abductions may be broadcast via participating TV and radio outlets. The guidelines for activating an Amber Alert are very strict to insure the public does not become complacent and ignore broadcasts. Activations are only made in cases where there is credible evidence to indicate that a child under the age of seventeen has been abducted and his or her life is in imminent danger.

PROCEDURES

I. Patrol Response to High Risk Missing Persons Cases

- A. Who last saw the missing person and where will be determined. An officer will proceed to the last known location or contact the last person to see the missing person and begin the preliminary investigation. Calls for service reporting high risk missing persons will be given a priority designation higher than calls involving property.
- B. Once sufficient information is obtained to broadcast a description of the person, last known location and method/direction of travel communications will be notified immediately. This information then will be re-broadcast to all units. As soon as possible CIU will be given the information for entry into NCIC. This will not delay the local broadcast.
- C. Obtain all information necessary to complete the report.
 1. In juvenile missing person's cases, the standard missing person report will be completed by the primary officer.
 2. In adult missing persons cases the NCIC report will be completed as well as the standard missing persons report.

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- D. This location should be treated as a crime scene and appropriate steps taken to preserve evidence.
 - 1. Particular attention should be paid to any unwashed clothing, bed sheets, etc. that may be useful to canine teams for tracking.
 - 2. If there is reasonable suspicion to believe the missing person has been abducted or is the victim of a criminal act such as robbery or assault, the appropriate investigative unit will be contacted.
- E. A supervisor will be notified and evaluate the situation. He or she will summon the necessary resources to conduct the preliminary search and investigation.
 - 1. In cases involving high-risk missing persons or any activation of the Amber Alert System the District commander will be notified. It will be his or her responsibility to evaluate the circumstances and determine if further command staff notifications will be necessary.
 - 2. The Media Relations office, or (after hours) the officer on call will also be notified, so they may handle media inquiries and/or prepare public information briefs to assist the investigation.
- F. Special considerations for missing children
 - 1. Search for young missing children at home first. Don't assume a thorough search was done by the child's parents or guardians.
 - 2. Search all spaces in which a child of that size could conceivably fit. This includes the residence, surrounding garage or out buildings and vehicles parked on the property.
 - 3. Special attention should be paid to attractive nuisances in the area such as discarded refrigerators, abandoned vehicles, swimming pools, etc.
 - 4. Be alert for signs of foul play or violence.
 - 5. Watch for signs of unusual behavior in the parents or guardians. These should be reported to a supervisor or investigator as soon as possible.
- G. When dealing with elderly persons the same considerations may apply as those for children. Take into account their physical limitations and condition when determining the scope of the search area.
- H. Search Methods - Each area to be searched may require different methods. The single overriding concern in searching is to be thorough and methodical, never hurried or haphazard.
 - 1. The grid search is a method used to search an area when there is evidence to indicate that the object of the search is contained within that specific region. A map of the area is divided into small, equal parts called grids. Each grid becomes the responsibility of a searcher or group of searchers. This method is applicable when sufficient personnel are available.

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2. The spiral or expanding circle search is a method used when there is evidence to indicate the object of the search is within a small area. The search begins from the last known location of the missing person and expands in the form of a tight spiral. This method is applicable when personnel are limited.
 3. The strip method is best used when the area to be covered is large and open. The area to be searched is divided into strips. The searcher or searchers walk along the strip, then turn and walks the opposite way along an adjacent strip.
- I. If the preliminary investigation and search is concluded and the person has not been found, an investigator will be contacted.
 1. In cases of missing persons where there is no reason to suspect another crime has been committed, the appropriate investigative unit is the Missing Persons Bureau.
 2. If there is reasonable suspicion to suspect the missing person has been the victim of a crime, the unit responsible for investigating the suspected crime will be notified.
 3. After hours, each investigative unit maintains a call-out list that is available in communications. If authorized by a supervisor, communications will page an investigator who will assess the situation and may respond if necessary.

II. Amber Alert Procedure

- A. In cases where an officer has probable cause to believe that a child has been abducted the department may initiate an Amber Alert, based on the following criteria.
 1. The child must be under the age of eighteen.
 2. The officer must reasonably believe the child is in imminent danger.
 3. There must be enough descriptive information available about the child, the abductor, and/or suspect vehicle to believe that an immediate area or statewide broadcast will be of help.
- B. Any officer investigating a case of suspected child abduction will contact his or her supervisor. Supervisors will respond to the scene and determine if all of the listed criteria have been met. Only in cases where all of the circumstances are present will an Amber Alert be initiated.
- C. Amber Alerts are in addition to, not instead of, the procedures listed for high-risk missing persons and reporting of missing persons.
- D. Supervisors will complete the Louisiana Amber Alert System initial reporting form. If any of the information requested on the form is not known, supervisors should reconsider activating the Amber Alert System.

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1. Once the form has been completed, supervisors should contact the shift commander. He or she must approve the activation. Once again, it is essential commanders review this information to determine there are reasonable grounds to believe all of the criteria have been met.
 2. If the commander approves the activation he or she must fax the form or (preferably) e-mail the information to the designated Louisiana State Police e-mail address/fax number. This information is available from communications, CIU, or any LSP office. A follow-up telephone call will also be made to make sure the fax/e-mail has been received.
 3. The investigating officer will attach the original copies of the form to his or her offense report.
- E. Detectives will be called out on any Amber Alert activation. Arrangements should be made as soon as possible to station an investigator in communications to screen the calls for information that must be acted on immediately. Lead sheets will be completed on all other calls pertaining to the investigation.
1. Only the case investigator or supervisor may cancel an alert.
 2. In cases where an investigator has been working a case and reasonably believes the Amber Alert criteria has been met, he or she may initiate the alert procedure with the approval of an investigative supervisor.

III. Patrol Response to Other than High Risk Cases

- A. The response in these cases will be determined by the primary investigating officer. Officers will be guided by their previous experience and the totality of the circumstances. If there is any doubt, contact a supervisor who will determine the level of response.
- B. Any investigation will be documented.
- C. Reports will be completed consistent with the NCIC categories, above (i.e. Adult Impaired, Juvenile, etc.).

IV. Missing Person Report for NCIC Entry Form

- A. A missing person report form will be completed on all missing persons.
- B. CIU personnel will enter the missing person in NCIC as soon as possible.
- C. In cases of adult missing persons the officer assigned to the call will complete the missing person report for NCIC entry form. This form must then be signed by the complainant. If the complainant refuses to sign the form, the officer will explain no entry may be made in NCIC and any investigation may be severely handicapped.
 1. If the complainant continues to refuse to sign the missing person report form, details of the refusal must be documented in the Miscellaneous Information section; use lined sheets as necessary.

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2. If the signature is unattainable where an adult is concerned, due to logistics or other unusual circumstances, as a last possible option the signature of the investigating officer will suffice.
 3. Officers investigating juvenile missing person's cases will complete the missing person report form; it does not require a signature for NCIC entry.
- D. The most current photograph of the missing person should be submitted to CIU via transmittal with the original missing person report for NCIC record entry form. The investigating officer will annotate on the back of the photograph the missing person's name and file number.
 - E. The officer or detective who completes the investigation will be responsible for canceling the Missing Person NCIC entry and completing any additional reports.
 - F. Communications will be responsible for the local radio broadcast in according to established procedure.
 - G. The Missing Person Bureau will be responsible for follow up investigations on all missing person complaints. Contacts with the reporting party will be made as often as is deemed necessary by the investigator, until the conclusion of the investigation.

V. Unidentified Persons

- A. Unidentified persons fitting the following criteria will be entered into NCIC as soon as possible.
 1. Unidentified Deceased Person - Any unidentified deceased person and/or body parts when a body has been dismembered.
 2. Unidentified Living Person - A person of any age who is living and unable to ascertain his identity, e.g., amnesia or Alzheimer victim, infant, etc. The information on unidentified living persons should only be included if the person gives his consent, or if they are physically or mentally unable to do so.
 3. Unidentified Catastrophe Victim - Any unidentified disaster victim and/or body parts when a body has been dismembered as a result of a disaster.
- B. For each person fitting one or more of the above criteria the Missing Person Bureau will complete the Unidentified Person Report for NCIC Entry form. Also, an Unidentified Person Packet will be completed as soon as possible.
- C. The Homicide Division will have primary investigative authority for all unidentified deceased persons.
- D. The Missing Person Bureau will have primary investigative authority for all adult unidentified living persons.
- E. The Missing Person Bureau will have primary investigative authority in all cases of juvenile unidentified living persons

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- F. In the event of a catastrophe the Incident Commander will assign personnel to complete these forms as necessary.
- G. Once these forms have been completed CIU will be notified as soon as possible and the data entered into NCIC. The cases will be worked according to normal procedure within the unit(s) affected.