

OHIO AMBER ALERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Live In-Person Meeting
2855 W. Dublin-Granville Road
Columbus, Ohio 43235
April 18, 2024

Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee member, Brent Currence, called to order the April 18, 2024 meeting of the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee at approximately 10:08 am. The first order of business was the roll call taken by Jackie Bonner.

I. ROLL CALL - PRESENT

IN-PERSON

Ohio AG's Office/Ohio Missing Persons' Clearinghouse	Brent Currence
Ohio Association of Broadcasters	Christine Merritt
Local/Regional AMBER Plan	Clark Donley
Community Member	Harry Trombitas
Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police	Chief Clayton Harris
Ohio Department of Transportation	Leslie Prater
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Captain Ron Raines

ROLL CALL – ABSENT

Ohio Emergency Management Agency	Brian Castner
Victim's Advocate	Kathryn (Ryn) Farmer
Buckeye State Sheriffs Association	Sheriff Jim Crawford
State Emergency Communications Committee	Paul Jellison

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ohio State Highway Patrol	S/Lieutenant Kristin Wickman
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Pam Walker
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Jackie Bonner
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Lieutenant Kelly Weakly
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Jeff Grayson
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Jonah Young
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Matt Stegner
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Jared Reagh
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Julie Akers
DAS 911 Program Office	Patrick Brandt
DAS 911 & MARCS	Angie Canera
Ohio EMA	Andrew Elder
Ohio EMA	Jeff Greene
Ohio DODD	Russell Blank
Ohio Department of Aging	Erin Pettegrew
MARCS	Larry McCoy
ABC WLWT News Network	Karin Johnson
ABS WLWT News Network	Chris Knight

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE (via Bridge Call)

Marion County Sheriff's Office
CECOMS
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Ohio DPS Legal
Ohio DOT

Lydia Frey
Jackie Costa
Bryan Lacey
Melissa Hicks
Tim Phillips

II. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 18, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Brent Currence asked the Ohio Amber Alert Advisory Committee to review the minutes from the January 18, 2024 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Harry Trombitas, Capt. Raines seconded. Motion carried by all. Minutes approved.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of AMBER Alerts:

Staff Lieutenant Wickman advised there were seven (7) AMBER Alert activations in the first quarter of 2024. Five (5) were activated by the OSHP Watch Desk and two (2) were activated regionally by CECOMS in the Central & East Lakeshore Region. S/Lt Wickman reported on the five (5) activations that were done by OSHP.

1. January 31, 2024 – requested by Cincinnati Police Department
2. February 14, 2024 – requested by Columbus Police Department
3. March 1, 2024 – requested by Marshalville Police Department
4. March 11, 2024 – requested by West Chester Police Department
5. March 23, 2024 – requested by Grove City Police Department

S/Lt Wickman gave a brief recap of each alert and notified the committee that unlocked and running stolen vehicles were the primary cause of recent AMBER Alerts. Brent Currence suggested a PSA be released by the media to remind the public to not leave children in unlocked, running vehicles.

There was an issue involving distribution of the newly updated 360-character WEA messaging system on the January 31st AMBER Alert. The content received by cell phones was not the intended message. The OEMA and OSHP have met with the vendor and IPAWS Lab, and have not been able to recreate the issue. Steps were put into place to help pinpoint the cause of the issue should the message go out incorrectly in the future. It was noted that the issue has not happened since the January 31st activation.

Jackie Costa gave a full report of the two (2) regional AMBER Alerts that were activate by CECOMS.

1. February 14, 2024 – requested by Cleveland Police Department
2. March 4, 2024 – requested by Rocky River Police Department

Jackie Costa stated that there were delays with IPAWS due to their mass messaging software. CECOMS reached out to their vendor to resolve the solution. CECOMS does not anticipate the delay to occur again due to them upgrading to a new system software.

It was determined that all activated AMBER Alert cases that became unfounded were still reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as AMBER Alerts. This is a nationwide practice.

B. Review of Blue Alerts:

There were no Blue Alerts for the first quarter of 2024.

C. Review of Endangered/Missing Child Alerts:

There were no Endangered/Missing Child Alerts for the first quarter of 2024.

D. Review of Endangered/Missing Adult Alerts:

Brent Currence reported that there were six (6) Endangered/Missing Adult Alerts this quarter. Five (5) were found safe, one (1) is still currently missing.

The criteria involving alerts being posted to ODOT's signs were discussed. It was determined that their criteria for the alert is that there is a probability of the victim being inside a vehicle.

Ohio Department of Aging investigates long term healthcare facilities that are involved in alerts to determine if there are any risks for other residents and staff of the facility. Erin Pettegrew asked whose responsibility it was to report if the victim came from a facility. Brent Currence stated that it was the local agency's responsibility to detail in the report if the victim came from a facility.

E. Alerts Training Update:

Captain Raines advised there was (1) regional training session in the first quarter of 2024 at the North Central Ohio Education Training Facility in Tiffin, OH. Sixteen (16) people were in attendance with a presence from Findlay Police Department. There are six (6) more scheduled training sessions for this year. Three (3) are the proactive trainings we have scheduled, three (3) are requested training sessions from Knox County Sherriff's Office, Campbell Police Department, and Pickaway Sherriff's Office. OPOTA has approved the Alerts Training for four (4) general hours of CPT credit. More requests for training are anticipated this year from other agencies.

F. WEA Messaging Updates:

Capt. Raines provided an example text of what a 360-character message would encompass. It was decided by the committee to start abbreviating some text to allow more character availability for more necessary information regarding an AMBER Alert.

Capt. Raines introduced the idea to the committee about having NCMEC send out the WEA alerts instead of the OSHP. It was noted at a symposium that he and Brent Currence attended that the majority of the state AMBER Alert Coordinators have the NCMEC distribute their messages when an AMBER Alert is activated. Jackie Costa stated that CECOMS has NCMEC distribute their messages and there are no significant delays when distributing the messages compared to them themselves sending out the alert messages. The committee requested more information on this subject and to come to a vote in the next quarterly meeting scheduled in July based on recommendations from Capt. Raines' and his findings.

G. Alerts Video Revision Subcommittee Update:

Jeff Grayson reported that all four (4) video scripts have been completed and approved by the Governor's Office. The AMBER and Blue Alert videos have been fully shot and are now being edited. Clark Donley finished recording the voiceovers for all four (4) videos. The two (2) other training videos for Endangered/Missing Children and Endangered/Missing Adult Alert videos are scheduled for shooting. All 4 videos will be completed and ready for the 2024 Alerts Conference on October 17, 2024.

It was noted that the following people and agencies were instrumental in the production of the new alerts training videos:

- Chief Eric Scott, Grove City Police Department (AMBER Alert video)
- Chief Gary Lewis, Bexley Police Department (Blue Alert video)
- Sheriff Matthew Hafey, Pickaway County Sheriff's Office (Endangered/Missing Child Alert & Endangered/Missing Adult Alert video)

H. Update on House Bill 321:

Angie Canepa reported that testimonies were presented to the House Committee in February. The testimonies were given by local agencies and not by the three (3) main agencies responsible for the bill, OOD, ODH, and DAS 911 & MARCS. These three (3) departments are responsible for working together to promote the HB and create a separate special needs database as proposed in HB 321. There hasn't been any communication between the three (3) departments so far. Russel Blank and Angie Canepa agreed to continue to monitor the House Bill and its status for the AMBER Alert Advisory Committee's awareness.

I. 2024 Alerts Conference Review:

Clark Donley reported that the Save the Date for the 2024 Alerts Conference has been distributed and the topics have been chosen. Speakers for the conference are still being finalized. The committee is hopeful for the conference to be granted CPT credit once the final agenda has been established, instructors determined, and lesson plans received. OPOTA approval will be contingent upon the timeliness of acquiring this information.

Jackie Costa stated that CECOMS is having their annual conference on October 23, 2024. They are anticipating roughly 400 - 450 attendees. They would also like to play the new Alerts Training videos.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. FCC Proposal for New EAS/WEA Codes for Missing Persons:

Christine Merritt reported that the FCC has proposed a new EAS code for Missing/Endangered persons. The FCC and legislation are requesting comments. Due to the proposal being voluntary, the states can choose whether or not they want to adopt the new EAS code if it passes. There is a concern that the public would get alert fatigue due to the amount of volume of Missing/Endangered persons cases in the state.

B. National AMBER Alert Symposium Review:

Capt. Raines reported that this symposium was very informative. It has led to ideas on additional trainings for the Watch Desk and kickstarting NCIC training sessions for OSHP

Dispatchers by the FBI. The information for the next National AMBER Alert Symposium will be distributed to the committee once it is known.

There is an alert symposium for our region that is held annually. Capt. Raines and/or S/Lt Wickman plan on attending those future sessions.

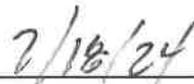
C. New Business from Committee Members:

Harry Trombitas inquired about any interest in Committee members purchasing matching polo shirts with the AMBER Alert logo on them. Capt. Raines will request information from a vendor utilized in the past and send it to Committee members.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Christine Merritt and seconded by Clark Donley. Meeting was adjourned.


Brent Currence, Chairperson


Date

