

COMMUNITY COMMENT, JULY 10, 2012

This is Officer Matt Harvey with the California Highway Patrol for Community Comment.

A parent's worst nightmare is a child abduction. ~~According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 74 percent of children who were abducted and later found murdered were killed within three hours of being taken.~~ Quick response is vital!

The month of July marks the ten year anniversary of the statewide AMBER ALERT System. AMBER ALERT empowers law enforcement, the media and the public to combat abduction by sending out immediate, up-to-date information that aids in the child's safe recovery. Using radio, television, the internet, highway information signs and even cell phone networks, AMBER ALERT gives the public the information needed to locate abducted children.

The AMBER ALERT program originated in Texas in 1996 after 9-year-old Amber Hagerman was abducted and murdered. Texas organized a system that encouraged law enforcement agencies to alert the media following a confirmed child abduction.

California adopted the AMBER ALERT System in 2002 after legislation established procedures to assist law enforcement, designating the California Highway Patrol as the statewide coordinator.

Since its inception in 2002, AMBER ALERT has been activated 197 times, resulting in the rescue or safe finding of 235 children.

The success of the system can be attributed to the coordinated efforts of the general public and law enforcement statewide.

The AMBER ALERT program continues to grow, taking advantage of new technologies and other means to alert the public. With the addition of the social networking service Facebook, AMBER Alerts are now available to millions of people. Facebook users can sign up to receive AMBER Alert bulletins which will be sent to them through the Facebook "News Feed" feature.

The CHP recommends that parents have their children photographed and fingerprinted so this ID information will be handy in case an incident does occur. The ID will help law enforcement in the search and identity of a missing or abducted child. Additionally, time is of the essence. When a child goes missing, parents should contact law enforcement immediately!

If you witness a child abduction, contact your local law enforcement agency or call 911 immediately! Provide information on the location of the abduction and a description of the victim, the suspect and any vehicle involved.

If you hear an AMBER ALERT, watch for the child, suspect and vehicle described in the alert. Immediately report any sightings by calling 911.

Public response to AMBER Alerts has been overwhelmingly positive, and the CHP thanks the public for its support.

For additional information regarding California's AMBER ALERT System, you can contact the California Highway Patrol at 1-800-TELL-CHP.

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