

FOLLOWING WERE PRINTED:

To check for circulating copies, contact New Jersey State Government Publications at the State Library (609) 278-2640 ext. 103 or <mailto:refdesk@njstatelib.org>

REPORTS:

No

HEARINGS:

No

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

Yes

"McGreevey signs Amber Alert into law," 12-23-2002, The Times p.A7

"NJ Amber Alert signed into law," 12-23-2002 Home News & Tribune, p.A1

"Governor signs bill for Amber Alert plan," 12-23-2002 The Inquirer, p.B6 -2002

"Amber Alert becomes law in New Jersey," 12-23-2002 Star Ledger, p.22

"Abduction alert system signed into law," 12-23-2002 New York Times, p.B2

P.L. 2002, CHAPTER 129, *approved December 22, 2002*
Assembly, No. 1558 (*Third Reprint*)

1 **AN ACT** concerning missing or abducted children, establishing
2 Amber's Plan and supplementing chapter 17B of Title 52 of the
3 Revised Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

7
8 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as "Amber's Plan."

9
10 2. a. The Legislature finds and determines that:

11 Public alerts can be one of the most effective tools in combating
12 child abductions;

13 Law enforcement officers and other professionals specializing in
14 the field of abducted and missing children agree that the most critical
15 moments in the search for an abducted child are the first few hours
16 immediately following the abduction, asserting that if a child is not
17 found within two to four hours, it is unlikely that child will be found
18 alive;

19 The rapid dissemination of information, including a description of
20 the missing child, details of the abduction, abductor and vehicle
21 involved, to the citizens of the affected community and region is,
22 therefore, critical;

23 Alerted to an abduction, the citizenry become an extensive network
24 of eyes and ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating
25 and safely recovering the child; and

26 The most effective method of immediately notifying the public of a
27 child abduction is through the broadcast media.

28 b. The Legislature declares that:

29 Given the successes other states and regions have experienced in
30 using broadcast media alerts to quickly locate and safely recover
31 abducted children, it is altogether fitting and proper, and within the
32 public interest, to establish such a program for New Jersey.

33
34 3. a. The Attorney General shall establish "Amber's Plan," a
35 program authorizing the broadcast media, upon notice from the State
36 Police, to transmit an emergency alert to inform the public of a child
37 abduction. The program shall be a voluntary, cooperative effort

EXPLANATION - Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹ Assembly ALP committee amendments adopted May 16, 2002.

² Senate SLP committee amendments adopted September 9, 2002.

³ Assembly floor amendments adopted October 17, 2002.

1 between State and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast
2 media.

3 b. The Attorney General shall notify the broadcast media serving
4 the State of New Jersey of the establishment of "Amber's Plan" and
5 invite their voluntary participation.

6 c. ²The following criteria shall be met before the State Police
7 activate the Amber Alert:

8 (1) The child is believed to be abducted;

9 (2) The child is ³[18] 17³ years of age or younger;

10 (3) The child may be in danger of death or serious bodily injury;
11 and

12 (4) There is sufficient information available to indicate that an
13 "Amber Alert" would assist in locating the child.

14 d.² The participating media shall voluntarily agree, upon notice
15 from the State Police, to transmit emergency alerts to inform the
16 public of a child abduction that has occurred within their broadcast
17 service regions. The notice shall be provided through the State Police
18 ¹[technology center which was established pursuant to section 2 of
19 P.L.1999, c.329 (C.52:17B-195) to coordinate and assist law
20 enforcement agencies in their responses to reports of missing children
21 and in their efforts to recover abducted children] operational dispatch
22 unit¹.

23 The alerts shall be read after a distinctive sound tone and the
24 statement: "This is an Amber ²Abducted Child² Alert." The alerts
25 shall be broadcast ²[every 15 minutes during the first three hours
26 immediately following the issuance of the State Police notice of the
27 abduction, every half hour for the next following three hours and at
28 such intervals thereafter]² as ²often as possible, pursuant to the
29 guidelines established by the New Jersey Broadcasters' Association,
30 for the first three hours. After the initial three hours, the alert shall be
31 rebroadcast at such intervals as the investigating authority.² the State
32 Police and the participating media deem appropriate.

33 The alerts shall include a description of the child, such details of the
34 abduction and abductor as may be known, and such other information
35 as the State Police may deem pertinent and appropriate. ²The State
36 Police shall in a timely manner update the broadcast media with new
37 information when appropriate concerning the abduction.²

38 The alerts also shall provide information concerning how those
39 members of the public who have information relating to the abduction
40 may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement
41 agency.

42 ²[d.] Concurrent with the notice provided to the broadcast media,
43 the State Police operational dispatch unit shall also notify the
44 Department of Transportation, the New Jersey Highway Authority, the
45 New Jersey Turnpike Authority and the South Jersey Transportation
46 Authority of the "Amber Alert." Through the use of their variable

1 message signs, the department and the affected authorities shall inform
2 the motoring public that an "Amber Alert" is in progress and provide
3 information relating to the abduction and how motorists may report
4 any information they have to the State Police or other appropriate law
5 enforcement agency.

6 e.² The alerts shall terminate upon notice from the State Police.

7 ²[e.] f.² The Attorney General, with the assistance of the
8 participating broadcast media, shall develop and undertake a public
9 education campaign to inform the public about ²[Amber's Plan]
10 "Amber's Plan"² and the emergency alert program established under
11 this act.

12 ²[f.] g.² The Attorney General may adopt guidelines to effectuate
13 the purposes of this act.

14

15 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

16

17

18

19

20 Establishes "Amber's Plan" to broadcast public alerts concerning
21 abducted children.

ASSEMBLY, No. 1558

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 210th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2002 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman LOUIS D. GREENWALD

District 6 (Camden)

Assemblyman GARY L. GUEAR, SR.

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Amber’s Plan” to broadcast public alerts concerning abducted children.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/1/2002)

1 AN ACT concerning missing or abducted children, establishing
2 Amber's Plan and supplementing chapter 17B of Title 52 of the
3 Revised Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

7
8 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as "Amber's Plan."

9
10 2. a. The Legislature finds and determines that:

11 Public alerts can be one of the most effective tools in combating
12 child abductions;

13 Law enforcement officers and other professionals specializing in
14 the field of abducted and missing children agree that the most critical
15 moments in the search for an abducted child are the first few hours
16 immediately following the abduction, asserting that if a child is not
17 found within two to four hours, it is unlikely that child will be found
18 alive;

19 The rapid dissemination of information, including a description of
20 the missing child, details of the abduction, abductor and vehicle
21 involved, to the citizens of the affected community and region is,
22 therefore, critical;

23 Alerted to an abduction, the citizenry become an extensive network
24 of eyes and ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating
25 and safely recovering the child; and

26 The most effective method of immediately notifying the public of a
27 child abduction is through the broadcast media.

28 b. The Legislature declares that:

29 Given the successes other states and regions have experienced in
30 using broadcast media alerts to quickly locate and safely recover
31 abducted children, it is altogether fitting and proper, and within the
32 public interest, to establish such a program for New Jersey.

33
34 3. a. The Attorney General shall establish "Amber's Plan," a
35 program authorizing the broadcast media, upon notice from the State
36 Police, to transmit an emergency alert to inform the public of a child
37 abduction. The program shall be a voluntary, cooperative effort
38 between State and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast
39 media.

40 b. The Attorney General shall notify the broadcast media serving
41 the State of New Jersey of the establishment of "Amber's Plan" and
42 invite their voluntary participation.

43 c. The participating media shall voluntarily agree, upon notice from
44 the State Police, to transmit emergency alerts to inform the public of
45 a child abduction that has occurred within their broadcast service
46 regions. The notice shall be provided through the State Police

1 technology center which was established pursuant to section 2 of
2 P.L.1999, c.329 (C.52:17B-195) to coordinate and assist law
3 enforcement agencies in their responses to reports of missing children
4 and in their efforts to recover abducted children.

5 The alerts shall be read after a distinctive sound tone and the
6 statement: "This is an Amber Alert." The alerts shall be broadcast
7 every 15 minutes during the first three hours immediately following
8 the issuance of the State Police notice of the abduction, every half
9 hour for the next following three hours and at such intervals thereafter
10 as the State Police and the participating media deem appropriate.

11 The alerts shall include a description of the child, such details of the
12 abduction and abductor as may be known, and such other information
13 as the State Police may deem pertinent and appropriate.

14 The alerts also shall provide information concerning how those
15 members of the public who have information relating to the abduction
16 may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement
17 agency.

18 d. The alerts shall terminate upon notice from the State Police.

19 e. The Attorney General, with the assistance of the participating
20 broadcast media, shall develop and undertake a public education
21 campaign to inform the public about Amber's Plan and the emergency
22 alert program established under this act.

23 f. The Attorney General may adopt guidelines to effectuate the
24 purposes of this act.

25
26 4. This act shall take effect immediately.
27
28

29 STATEMENT
30

31 This bill directs the Attorney General to establish an "Amber Plan"
32 for the State of New Jersey.

33 An "Amber Plan" is a voluntary, cooperative effort between State
34 and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast media. Upon
35 notice by the State Police, the participating broadcast media would
36 transmit an emergency alert to inform the public that there has been a
37 child abduction in the area. Public awareness can be a most valuable
38 tool in assisting law enforcement in securing the safe recovery of an
39 abducted child.

40 Under the provisions of the bill, the alerts are to be read after a
41 distinctive sound tone and the statement: "This is an Amber Alert."
42 The alerts are to be broadcasted every 15 minutes during the first three
43 hours immediately following the issuance of the State Police notice of
44 the abduction, every half hour for the next following three hours and
45 at such intervals thereafter as the State Police and the participating
46 media deem appropriate.

A1558 GREENWALD, GUEAR

1 The alerts are to include a description of the child, such details of
2 the abduction and abductor as may be known, and such other
3 information as the State Police may deem pertinent and appropriate.

4 The alerts also are to provide information concerning how those
5 members of the public who have information relating to the abduction
6 may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement
7 agency.

8 Prompt action is critical in child abduction cases. Law enforcement
9 sources contend that if an abducted child is not found within two to
10 four hours, the chance of that child being found alive is not good.

11 An alerted citizenry can become an extensive network of eyes and
12 ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating and safely
13 recovering an abducted child.

14 The “Amber Plan” is named after Amber Hagerman, a nine-year-old
15 Arlington, Texas child, who was abducted and killed in 1996. In
16 response to that tragedy, the radio stations in the Dallas/Fort Worth
17 area agreed to repeat news bulletins about abducted children just as
18 they provide severe weather warnings, hoping that such bulletins
19 would provide an important public service and might help save the life
20 of a child.

21 Since that time, a number of states and regions have developed and
22 established their own “Amber Plan.”

ASSEMBLY LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1558

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 16, 2002

The Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 1558.

Assembly Bill No. 1558 directs the Attorney General to establish an “Amber Plan” for the State of New Jersey.

An “Amber Plan” is a voluntary, cooperative effort between State and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast media. Upon notice by the State Police, the participating broadcast media would transmit an emergency alert to inform the public that there has been a child abduction in the area. Public awareness can be a most valuable tool in assisting law enforcement in securing the safe recovery of an abducted child.

Under the provisions of the amended bill, the alerts are to be read after a distinctive sound tone and the statement: “This is an Amber Alert.” The alerts are to be broadcasted every 15 minutes during the first three hours immediately following the issuance of the State Police notice of the abduction, every half hour for the next following three hours and at such intervals thereafter as the State Police and the participating media deem appropriate.

The alerts are to include a description of the child, such details of the abduction and abductor as may be known, and such other information as the State Police may deem pertinent and appropriate.

The alerts also are to provide information concerning how those members of the public who have information relating to the abduction may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement agency.

According to the sponsor, prompt action is critical in child abduction cases. Law enforcement sources contend that if an abducted child is not found within two to four hours, the chance of that child being found alive is not good. An alerted citizenry can become an extensive network of eyes and ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating and safely recovering an abducted child.

The “Amber Plan” is named after Amber Hagerman, a nine-year-old Arlington, Texas child, who was abducted and killed in 1996. In response to that tragedy, the radio stations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area agreed to repeat news bulletins about abducted children just as

they provide severe weather warnings, hoping that such bulletins would provide an important public service and might help save the life of a child. Since that time, a number of states and regions have developed and established their own “Amber Plan.”

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 2002-2003 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to specify that the notice of a child abduction provided by the State Police to participating media would be through the State Police operational dispatch unit, rather than the State Police technology center. The operational dispatch unit is staffed 24 hours a day, while the technology center is staffed on a more limited basis.

SENATE LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY AND VETERANS'
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 1558

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 9, 2002

The Senate Law and Public Safety and Veterans' Affairs Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 1558 (1R).

This bill directs the Attorney General to establish an "Amber Plan" for the State of New Jersey.

An "Amber Plan" is a voluntary, cooperative effort between State and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast media. Upon notice by the State Police, the participating broadcast media would transmit an emergency alert to inform the public that there has been a child abduction in the area. Public awareness can be a most valuable tool in assisting law enforcement in securing the safe recovery of an abducted child.

Under the provisions of the bill as amended and released by the committee, the following criteria are to be met before the State Police activate an Amber alert: (1) the child is believed to be abducted; (2) the child is 18 years of age or younger; (3) the child may be in danger of death or serious bodily injury; and (4) there is sufficient information available to indicate that an Amber Alert would assist in locating the child.

The amended bill provides that the alerts are to be read after a distinctive sound tone and the statement: "This is an Amber Abducted Child Alert." The committee amended the bill to provide that the alerts would be broadcasted as often as possible for the first three hours pursuant to the guidelines established by the New Jersey Broadcaster's Association and at such intervals thereafter as the investigating authority, the State Police and the participating media deem appropriate. As introduced, the bill provided that the alerts were to be broadcasted every 15 minutes during the first three hours immediately following the issuance of the State Police notice of the abduction, and every half hour for the next following three hours.

The alerts are to include a description of the child, such details of

the abduction and abductor as may be known, and other information the State Police deem pertinent and appropriate. The committee amendments further require the State Police to update the broadcast media in a timely manner with new information when appropriate.

The alerts also are to provide information concerning how those members of the public who have information relating to the abduction may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement agency.

The committee amendments also provide that the Department of Transportation (DOT), the New Jersey Highway Authority, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority and the South Jersey Transportation Authority would be involved in informing the public of child abductions. Whenever the State Police notify the broadcast media of an "Amber Alert," they also would notify the DOT and these authorities. Through the use of their variable message signs, they are to inform the motoring public that an "Amber Alert" is in progress and provide other information relating to the abduction and how motorists may report any information they have to the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement agency. Variable message signs are those digital and electronic message boards used to inform motorists about traffic congestion, accidents, delays, construction and maintenance issues.

According to the sponsor, prompt action is critical in child abduction cases. Law enforcement sources contend that if an abducted child is not found within two to four hours, the chance of that child being found alive is not good. An alerted citizenry can become an extensive network of eyes and ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating and safely recovering an abducted child.

The "Amber Plan" is named after Amber Hagerman, a nine-year-old Arlington, Texas child, who was abducted and killed in 1996. In response to that tragedy, the radio stations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area agreed to repeat news bulletins about abducted children just as they provide severe weather warnings, hoping that such bulletins would provide an important public service and might help save the life of a child. Since that time, a number of states and regions have developed and established their own "Amber Plan."

As amended and released by the committee, this bill is identical to the Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill Nos. 1229 and 1737, which also was released by the committee on this same date.

STATEMENT TO
[Second Reprint]
ASSEMBLY, No. 1558

with Assembly Floor Amendments
(Proposed By Assemblymen GREENWALD and GUEAR)

ADOPTED: OCTOBER 17, 2002

Assembly Bill No. 1558 (2R) directs the Attorney General to establish an "Amber Plan" for the State of New Jersey. An "Amber Plan" is a voluntary, cooperative effort between State and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast media. Upon notice by the State Police, the participating broadcast media would transmit an emergency alert to inform the public that there has been a child abduction in the area. Public awareness can be a most valuable tool in assisting law enforcement in securing the safe recovery of an abducted child.

The bill specifies that the following criteria are to be met before the State Police activate an Amber alert: (1) the child is believed to be abducted; (2) the child is 18 years of age or younger; (3) the child may be in danger of death or serious bodily injury; and (4) there is sufficient information available to indicate that an Amber Alert would assist in locating the child.

Under this Assembly amendment, the State Police would be required to activate an Amber alert if the missing child is 17 years of age or younger, rather than 18 years of age or younger as currently provided in the bill.

SENATE, No. 1229

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
210th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 28, 2002

Sponsored by:

Senator JOHN H. ADLER

District 6 (Camden)

Senator RICHARD H. BAGGER

District 21 (Essex, Morris, Somerset and Union)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Amber’s Plan” to broadcast public alerts concerning abducted children.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/1/2002)

1 AN ACT concerning missing or abducted children, establishing
2 Amber's Plan and supplementing chapter 17B of Title 52 of the
3 Revised Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

7
8 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as "Amber's Plan."
9

10 2. a. The Legislature finds and determines that:

11 Public alerts can be one of the most effective tools in combating
12 child abductions;

13 Law enforcement officers and other professionals specializing in
14 the field of abducted and missing children agree that the most critical
15 moments in the search for an abducted child are the first few hours
16 immediately following the abduction, asserting that if a child is not
17 found within two to four hours, it is unlikely that child will be found
18 alive;

19 The rapid dissemination of information, including a description of
20 the missing child, details of the abduction, abductor and vehicle
21 involved, to the citizens of the affected community and region is,
22 therefore, critical;

23 Alerted to an abduction, the citizenry become an extensive network
24 of eyes and ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating
25 and safely recovering the child; and

26 The most effective method of immediately notifying the public of a
27 child abduction is through the broadcast media.

28 b. The Legislature declares that:

29 Given the successes other states and regions have experienced in
30 using broadcast media alerts to quickly locate and safely recover
31 abducted children, it is altogether fitting and proper, and within the
32 public interest, to establish such a program for New Jersey.
33

34 3. a. The Attorney General shall establish "Amber's Plan," a
35 program authorizing the broadcast media, upon notice from the State
36 Police, to transmit an emergency alert to inform the public of a child
37 abduction. The program shall be a voluntary, cooperative effort
38 between State and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast
39 media.

40 b. The Attorney General shall notify the broadcast media serving
41 the State of New Jersey of the establishment of "Amber's Plan" and
42 invite their voluntary participation.

43 c. The participating media shall voluntarily agree, upon notice from
44 the State Police, to transmit emergency alerts to inform the public of
45 a child abduction that has occurred within their broadcast service
46 regions. The notice shall be provided through the State Police

1 technology center which was established pursuant to section 2 of
2 P.L.1999, c.329 (C.52:17B-195) to coordinate and assist law
3 enforcement agencies in their responses to reports of missing children
4 and in their efforts to recover abducted children.

5 The alerts shall be read after a distinctive sound tone and the
6 statement: "This is an Amber Alert." The alerts shall be broadcast
7 every 15 minutes during the first three hours immediately following
8 the issuance of the State Police notice of the abduction, every half
9 hour for the next following three hours and at such intervals thereafter
10 as the State Police and the participating media deem appropriate.

11 The alerts shall include a description of the child, such details of the
12 abduction and abductor as may be known, and such other information
13 as the State Police may deem pertinent and appropriate.

14 The alerts also shall provide information concerning how those
15 members of the public who have information relating to the abduction
16 may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement
17 agency.

18 d. The alerts shall terminate upon notice from the State Police.

19 e. The Attorney General, with the assistance of the participating
20 broadcast media, shall develop and undertake a public education
21 campaign to inform the public about Amber's Plan and the emergency
22 alert program established under this act.

23 f. The Attorney General may adopt guidelines to effectuate the
24 purposes of this act.

25
26 4. This act shall take effect immediately.
27
28

29 STATEMENT
30

31 This bill directs the Attorney General to establish an "Amber Plan"
32 for the State of New Jersey.

33 An "Amber Plan" is a voluntary, cooperative effort between State
34 and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast media. Upon
35 notice by the State Police, the participating broadcast media would
36 transmit an emergency alert to inform the public that there has been a
37 child abduction in the area. Public awareness can be a most valuable
38 tool in assisting law enforcement in securing the safe recovery of an
39 abducted child.

40 Under the provisions of the bill, the alerts are to be read after a
41 distinctive sound tone and the statement: "This is an Amber Alert."
42 The alerts are to be broadcasted every 15 minutes during the first three
43 hours immediately following the issuance of the State Police notice of
44 the abduction, every half hour for the next following three hours and
45 at such intervals thereafter as the State Police and the participating
46 media deem appropriate.

S1229 ADLER, BAGGER

4

1 The alerts are to include a description of the child, such details of
2 the abduction and abductor as may be known, and such other
3 information as the State Police may deem pertinent and appropriate.

4 The alerts also are to provide information concerning how those
5 members of the public who have information relating to the abduction
6 may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement
7 agency.

8 Prompt action is critical in child abduction cases. Law enforcement
9 sources contend that if an abducted child is not found within two to
10 four hours, the chance of that child being found alive is not good.

11 An alerted citizenry can become an extensive network of eyes and
12 ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating and safely
13 recovering an abducted child.

14 The “Amber Plan” is named after Amber Hagerman, a nine-year-old
15 Arlington, Texas child, who was abducted and killed in 1996. In
16 response to that tragedy, the radio stations in the Dallas/Fort Worth
17 area agreed to repeat news bulletins about abducted children just as
18 they provide severe weather warnings, hoping that such bulletins
19 would provide an important public service and might help save the life
20 of a child.

21 Since that time, a number of states and regions have developed and
22 established their own “Amber Plan.”

SENATE, No. 1737

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
210th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 30, 2002

Sponsored by:

Senator JOSEPH M. KYRILLOS, JR.
District 13 (Middlesex and Monmouth)
Senator JOHN A. GIRGENTI
District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:

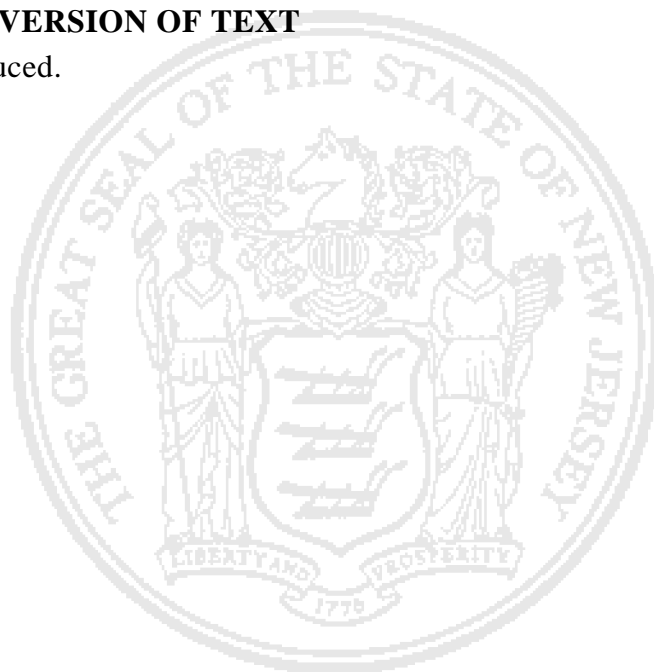
Senators Cafiero, Palaia, Matheussen, Bucco, Allen, Inverso and Buono

SYNOPSIS

Establishes "Rachael Alert" to broadcast alerts concerning abducted children.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning missing or abducted children, and supplementing
2 chapter 17B of Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. a. The Legislature finds that law enforcement officers and other
8 professionals specializing in the field of abducted and missing children
9 agree that the most critical period in the search for an abducted child
10 is the first few hours immediately following the abduction. Experts
11 assert that if a child is not found within two to four hours, the
12 prospects of finding the child alive greatly diminish. Rapid
13 dissemination of information, including a description of the missing
14 child, details of the abduction, abductor and vehicle involved, to the
15 citizens of the affected community and region is, therefore, critical.
16 Alerted to an abduction, the citizenry can become part of the solution,
17 serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating and safely
18 recovering the child.

19 The Legislature further finds that public alerts are a useful tool in
20 combating child abductions, and that the most effective method of
21 immediately alerting the public in these critical moments is through the
22 broadcast media.

23 b. The Legislature declares that given the successes other states
24 and regions have experienced in using broadcast media alerts to
25 quickly locate and safely recover abducted children, it is altogether
26 fitting and proper, and within the public interest, to establish such a
27 program for New Jersey.

28
29 2. a. The Attorney General shall establish a program to be known
30 as the "Rachael Alert," authorizing the broadcast media, upon notice
31 from the State Police, to transmit an emergency alert to inform the
32 public of a child abduction. The program shall be a voluntary,
33 cooperative effort between State and local law enforcement agencies
34 and the broadcast media.

35 b. The Attorney General shall notify the broadcast media serving
36 the State of New Jersey of the establishment of the Rachael Alert and
37 invite their voluntary participation.

38 c. The following criteria shall be met before the State Police
39 activate the Rachael Alert:

- 40 (1) The child is believed to be abducted;
41 (2) The child is 15 years of age or younger, or is 18 years of age
42 or younger and has a physical and mental disability;
43 (3) The child may be in danger of death or serious bodily injury;
44 and
45 (4) There is sufficient information available to disseminate to the

1 public that may assist in the safe recovery of the child or the
2 apprehension of a suspect, including but not limited to a description of
3 the abductor, the abductor's vehicle or the child's last known location.

4 d. The participating media shall voluntarily agree, upon notice from
5 the State Police, to transmit emergency alerts to inform the public of
6 a child abduction that has occurred within their broadcast service
7 regions. The notice shall be provided through the State Police
8 technology center which was established pursuant to section 2 of
9 P.L.1999, c.329 (C.52:17B-195) to coordinate and assist law
10 enforcement agencies in their responses to reports of missing children
11 and in their efforts to recover abducted children.

12 Immediately following the issuance of the State Police notice of the
13 abduction, the alerts shall be broadcast on the radio, and television
14 stations shall air the alert in the form of captions at the bottom of the
15 screen, at such intervals as the State Police and the participating media
16 deem appropriate.

17 The alerts shall include a description of the child, such details of the
18 abduction and abductor as may be known, and such other information
19 as the State Police may deem pertinent and appropriate.

20 The alerts also shall provide information concerning how those
21 members of the public who have information relating to the abduction
22 may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement
23 agency.

24 e. The alerts shall terminate upon notice from the State Police.

25 f. The Attorney General, with the assistance of the participating
26 broadcast media, shall develop and undertake a public education
27 campaign to inform the public about the "Rachael Alert" program
28 established under this act.

29 g. The Attorney General may adopt guidelines to effectuate the
30 purposes of this act.

31

32 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

33

34

35

STATEMENT

36

37 This bill directs the Attorney General to establish a "Rachael Alert"
38 plan for the State of New Jersey.

39 The Rachael Alert is a voluntary, cooperative effort between State
40 and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast media. Upon
41 notice by the State Police, the participating broadcast media would
42 transmit an emergency alert to inform the public that there has been a
43 child abduction in the area. These alerts are necessary because public
44 awareness is valuable tool in assisting law enforcement in securing the
45 safe recovery of an abducted child.

46 Immediately following the issuance of the State Police notice of the

1 abduction, the alerts would be broadcast on the radio, and television
2 stations would air the alert in the form of captions at the bottom of
3 the screen, known as a "crawl," at such intervals as the State Police
4 and the participating media deem appropriate.

5 Under the bill's provisions, the following criteria must be met before
6 the State Police activate the Rachael Alert: (1) the child is believed to
7 be abducted; (2) the child is 15 years of age or younger, or is 18 years
8 of age or younger and has a physical and mental disability; (3) the
9 child may be in danger of death or serious bodily injury; and (4) there
10 is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that may
11 assist in the safe recovery of the child or the apprehension of a
12 suspect, including but not limited to a description of the abductor, the
13 abductor's vehicle or the child's last known location.

14 The alerts also are to provide information concerning how those
15 members of the public who have information relating to the abduction
16 may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement
17 agency.

18 Prompt action is critical in child abduction cases. Law enforcement
19 sources contend that if an abducted child is not found within two to
20 four hours, the prospects of finding the child alive greatly diminish.
21 An alerted citizenry can assist law enforcement in quickly locating and
22 safely recovering an abducted child.

23 The "Rachael Alert" is named after Rachael Runyan, a three-year-
24 old Sunset, Utah child, who was abducted and killed in 1982. The
25 program is modeled after a similar program, known as "Amber's
26 Plan," started in the Dallas/Fort Worth area after the abduction and
27 murder of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman. In response to that tragedy,
28 radio stations in the area agreed to repeat news bulletins about
29 abducted children just as they provide severe weather warnings,
30 hoping that such bulletins would provide an important public service
31 and might help save the life of a child.

SENATE LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY AND VETERANS'
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, Nos. 1229 and 1737

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 9, 2002

The Senate Law and Public Safety and Veterans' Affairs Committee reports favorably a Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill Nos. 1229 and 1737.

This committee substitute directs the Attorney General to establish an "Amber Plan" for the State of New Jersey.

An "Amber Plan" is a voluntary, cooperative effort between State and local law enforcement agencies and the broadcast media. Upon notice by the State Police, the participating broadcast media would transmit an emergency alert to inform the public that there has been a child abduction in the area. Public awareness can be a most valuable tool in assisting law enforcement in securing the safe recovery of an abducted child.

Under the provisions of the substitute, the following criteria are to be met before the State Police activate an Amber alert: (1) the child is believed to be abducted; (2) the child is 18 years of age or younger; (3) the child may be in danger of death or serious bodily injury; and (4) there is sufficient information available to indicate that an Amber Alert would assist in locating the child.

The substitute provides that the alerts are to be read after a distinctive sound tone and the statement: "This is an Amber Abducted Child Alert." The alerts are to be broadcasted as often as possible for the first three hours pursuant to the guidelines established by the New Jersey Broadcaster's Association and at such intervals thereafter as the investigating authority, the State Police and the participating media deem appropriate.

The alerts are to include a description of the child, such details of the abduction and abductor as may be known, and other information the State Police deem pertinent and appropriate. The State Police are to update the broadcast media in a timely manner with new information concerning the abduction, as appropriate.

The alerts also are to provide information concerning how those members of the public who have information relating to the abduction may contact the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement

agency.

The substitute further provides that the Department of Transportation (DOT), the New Jersey Highway Authority, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority and the South Jersey Transportation Authority would also be involved in informing the public of child abductions. Whenever the State Police notify the broadcast media of an "Amber Alert," they also would notify the DOT and these authorities. Through the use of their variable message signs, they are to inform the motoring public that an "Amber Alert" is in progress and provide other information relating to the abduction and how motorists may report any information they have to the State Police or other appropriate law enforcement agency. Variable message signs are those digital and electronic message boards used to inform motorists about traffic congestion, accidents, delays, construction and maintenance issues.

According to the sponsor, prompt action is critical in child abduction cases. Law enforcement sources contend that if an abducted child is not found within two to four hours, the chance of that child being found alive is not good. An alerted citizenry can become an extensive network of eyes and ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating and safely recovering an abducted child.

The "Amber Plan" is named after Amber Hagerman, a nine-year-old Arlington, Texas child, who was abducted and killed in 1996. In response to that tragedy, the radio stations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area agreed to repeat news bulletins about abducted children just as they provide severe weather warnings, hoping that such bulletins would provide an important public service and might help save the life of a child. Since that time, a number of states and regions have developed and established their own "Amber Plan."

This committee substitute is identical to Assembly Bill No. 1558 (1R), which also was amended and released by the committee on this same date.

?		?		
?				
?	?	?	?	?

Press Releases

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

Contact: Kevin Davitt
609-777-2600

RELEASE: December 23, 2002

[Previous Screen](#)

McGreevey Signs Amber Alert System Bill Into Law

(WEST TRENTON)—At the State Police Headquarters in West Trenton, Governor James E. McGreevey signed legislation today establishing the Amber Alert system in New Jersey. The Amber Alert system utilizes media alerts to help locate missing children within hours after they are abducted.

In August, the Governor instructed the Attorney General and the State Police to expedite the development of the State's Amber Alert system in order to make it operational by the fall. The new law effectively codifies the agreement between the broadcasters and the State Police to implement the Amber Alert.

“When children are abducted, time is of the essence,” said McGreevey. “Whether they’re driving their car or watching TV, the goal of the Amber Alert system is to galvanize all New Jerseyans in the search and safe return of missing children. Clearly, the Amber Plan is about finding missing children, saving lives and catching abductors.”

The Amber Alert system is named after Amber Hagerman , a 9-year-old Texas girl who was abducted and killed in 1996. To date, the Amber Plan has been credited with recovering 41 children across the nation. New Jersey is one of 30 states to have implemented statewide Amber Plans.

Under the plan, broadcasters send out an Amber Alert during the most crucial time—the first few hours after a child is abducted. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 74 percent of the children murdered by non-family members are killed within the first three hours after their abduction.

To notify the public of an abduction, broadcasters use the Emergency Alert System (EAS), formerly called the Emergency Broadcast System, to air information about the missing child, suspected abductor and the vehicle involved. The alert is broadcast as often as possible—every 15 to 25 minutes during the first three hours after the State Police issues an abduction notice, and every 30 to 60 minutes during hours three through six.

Additionally, the Department of Transportation, the New Jersey Highway Authority, Turnpike Authority and the South Jersey Transportation Authority will be notified so that they can broadcast the alert on their roadway message signs.

The bill, A-1558 was sponsored by Assemblymen Louis Greenwald (D-Camden) and Gary

Guear (D-Mercer, Middlesex). The Senate version was sponsored by Senators John Adler (D-Camden), John Girgenti (D-Passaic, Bergen), Richard Bagger (R-Essex, Union, Somerset, Morris), and Joseph Kyrillos (R-Monmouth, Middlesex).

"New Jersey parents can now rest assured that the state is doing everything it can to ensure the safety of their children," said Greenwald. "It's been proven over and over again now that the Amber Alert Plan indeed saves lives. Amber alerts are an easy way to enlist the help of every citizen within eyeshot or earshot of TV, radios, and message boards, in the rescue of an abducted child."

"We hope New Jersey never has to utilize the Amber Alert System, but we know it's there just in case," said Guear, a former Trenton police detective. "If we are able to save just one family from the trauma of losing their child, the effort will have been well worth it."

Adler, co-chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee said: "'Amber Alert' represents our best possible chance of finding missing or abducted children quickly and without harm. Often, the first few hours of an abduction are the most important, and the likelihood of finding a child alive after the first few hours is greatly reduced. Having a network of literally thousands of eyes and ears on our roadways keeping an eye out for a missing child could mean the difference between life and death for our State's sons and daughters."

"We've seen the successes of Amber Alert in states such as California in recent months in the finding of kidnapped or missing children," added Girgenti, co-chair of the Senate Law and Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee. "By enlisting the public, law enforcement organizations have an increased pool of informants and an important tool in ensuring the safety of children. Bringing Amber Alert to New Jersey will invariably aid our law enforcement community in the protection of New Jersey's children."



State of New Jersey Governor's Office

statewide: [njhome](#) | [my new jersey](#) | [people](#) | [business](#) | [government](#) | [departments](#) | [search](#)
Copyright © State of New Jersey, 2002