

# OHIO AMBER ALERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

January 25, 2017

Ohio Department of Public Safety  
1970 West Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43223

Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee Chairman, Captain Kenneth Kocab, called to order the January 25, 2017 meeting of the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee at approximately 10:04 a.m. The first order of business was the roll call taken by Lindy Davis, OSHP.

## I. ROLL CALL - PRESENT

Department of Public Safety, Ohio State Highway Patrol	Captain Kenneth Kocab
Ohio Attorney General's Office, Missing Persons Unit	Brent Currence
Local/Regional AMBER Plan, Mid-Ohio AMBER Alert	Clark Donley
Community Member	Harry Trombitas
Ohio Emergency Management Agency	Ronald (Dave) Ford
Buckeye State Sheriff's Association	Sheriff Ronald Myers
Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police	Chief Clayton Harris
Ohio Department of Transportation	Leslie Bricker
State Emergency Communications Committee	Paul Jellison
Ohio Association of Broadcasters	Christine Merritt
Federal Bureau of Investigation	Special Agent Kristin Cadieux

## ROLL CALL – ABSENT

Victim's Advocate	Maggie Maloy
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## OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ohio State Highway Patrol	Lindy Davis
Ohio State Highway Patrol	DM Lydia Frey
Ohio 911 Program Office	Rob Jackson
Ohio 911 Program Office	Nick Levin

## A QUORUM WAS DECLARED

## II. APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 25, 2016 MEETING MINUTES

Captain Kocab asked the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee to review the minutes. Sheriff Myers made the motion to adopt the October 25, 2016 minutes, Chief Harris seconded. Motion carried by all.

## III. OLD BUSINESS

### A. Review of AMBER Alerts

Captain Kocab indicated there were zero (0) AMBER Alerts for the reporting period.

Clark Donley inquired about an EAS activation on January 5, 2017, via a crawl on Time Warner. The alert was for a child out of Michigan and was not related to Ohio. Captain Kocab indicated he checked and nothing was activated in Ohio and he was not sure how it happened, nor could anyone explain.

B. Review of Blue Alerts

Captain Kocab indicated there was zero (0) Blue Alerts for the reporting period.

C. Review of Endangered Missing Child Alerts

Brent Currence indicated there were three (3) Endangered Missing Child Alerts for the reporting period. He gave a brief overview of each. All children were found safe.

Christine Merritt inquired about one of the alerts and the reason for issuing an Endangered Missing Child Alert verses an AMBER Alert. Brent Currence shared the child was taken by her mother and the boyfriend did not feel the suspect would harm the child. However, he felt the child was in danger due to the mother's previous history of drug use.

D. Review of Endangered Missing Adult Alerts

There were thirty-nine (39) Endangered Missing Adult Alerts for the reporting period. Brent Currence provided a brief overview of several of the alerts. All adults were recovered safely, with the exception of three (3) individuals who were found deceased.

Christine Merritt asked about the 2016 statistics. Brent Currence shared there were 151 alerts for the year, 1,169 since inception in June 2008, and indicated they average about 15 calls a week. Christine Merritt asked if the requests received in 2016 were more on target with the alert criteria than in the past. Brent Currence indicated although there are still issues, the quality of the requests have improved and the agencies have a better understanding of the criteria. Brent Currence shared he has to rely on the information provided by local law enforcement when requesting the alert. If the agency is answering "yes" to the criteria, he has to issue the alert, regardless of his gut feeling. He indicated at times, he feels the agencies are covering themselves, because they feel they have run out of options, have done everything they can, or are under pressure from the family. Brent Currence said the agencies know to say yes to the criteria questions, even though he has provided alternatives and offers of assistance from his agency. He shared there are other states who issue more Endangered Missing Adult Alerts than Ohio and this has been discussed between the Clearinghouses having problems. Brent Currence said Indiana requires a doctor to sign off before an alert can be issued and they have fewer alerts as a result. He shared he did not know if this was something we would want to consider looking into or not. Brent Currence indicated it is written in our law the individual has to be diagnosed by a doctor. Christine Merritt and Harry Trombitas both indicated the process of having to get certification from a doctor to issue an alert would delay the process. Brent Currence said it does delay their process, but in return, Indiana has fewer alerts. Clark Donley asked Brent if he feels Ohio issues too many Endangered Missing Adult Alerts. Brent Currence indicated, he does. Brent Currence said his concern is the public is becoming desensitized to the alerts and they are being ignored. Brent Currence shared he has received feedback from individuals within his agency who indicated they are automatically deleting the Endangered Missing Adult Alerts. He indicated this is exactly what we don't want, but the

situation we have found ourselves in. Brent Currence indicated he has tried to address this through his training and he has assisted agencies that have had issues.

Christine Merritt asked through the discussions with other state Clearinghouses, are there practices or structures that could benefit Ohio. Brent Currence indicated he is still researching, but other than Indiana, no other states have reduced their numbers. Harry Trombitas asked if he would call the program a success. Brent Currence indicated he would and it has helped a lot of cases. He shared, if you look at some of the alerts where the individual returned home on their own, safely, it makes you question if there are that many health related issues that put the individual's life at risk. Brent Currence indicated he has found in a lot of cases, the child and parent don't have a close relationship and when the child can't locate the parent, they panic. Brent Currence said in many cases, the individual was out on a date, shopping, etc. Clark Donley inquired if our alert numbers were in proportion to our adult population? Brent Currence indicated he does not know the demographics, but last year there were almost 5,000 missing adults with 150 Endangered Adult Alerts issued and there were 19,000 missing children with 30 combined Endangered Missing Child and AMBER Alerts issued. Clark Donley asked how that would compare to states similar to our population. Brent Currence said he could reach out to a couple contacts, but North Carolina is having issues and has already reached out to other states for suggestions. He indicated there was a group conference call to discuss issues and ideas and they weren't able to come up with a solution.

Sheriff Myers indicated he noticed a line of demarcate between individuals diagnosed with dementia, Alzheimer's, etc. and other groups. He said, for those with dementia, for example, it appears most were located by law enforcement or found deceased. Sheriff Myers shared he does not know if a doctor's approval is necessary, but maybe a diagnosis would be one of the steps to consider. Clark Donley recommended Brent Currence research other states to see what was working and present at the next quarterly meeting. Brent Currence said they had the recent conference call where issues and ideas were discussed, but not all the states have this alert yet. He indicated many of the states with this alert are dealing with the same issues as Ohio.

Clark Donley inquired with the committee if they should entertain a criteria modification to the Endangered Missing Adult Alert to reduce the number of alerts. Sheriff Myers asked about the criteria law and what is required and Brent Currence explained the criteria in detail. Harry Trombitas asked what percentage of the missing individuals returned on their own accord within 24 hours. Brent Currence indicated it was rare to have an Endangered Missing Adult Alert last more than 24 hours. Harry Trombitas indicated the criteria could be strengthened by having a medical diagnosis that would put the individual in physical danger, which would warrant the alert. He suggested if there is no medical issue, possibly establishing a 24 hour waiting period. Christine Merritt asked Chief Harris and Sheriff Myers for their opinions. Sheriff Myers indicated they call out the Fire Departments and do searches before considering an alert and have had good success. He shared they have a small rural county and are familiar with everyone in their community and people want something done when a family member is missing. Sheriff Myers indicated public outcry will be the biggest issue, as families will want all resources used to find their loved one. Harry Trombitas indicated it is the same argument we encounter with the Endangered Missing Child Alert and AMBER Alert. He said it comes down to an explanation of the criteria.

Christine Merritt shared in looking at the Endangered Missing Adults a lot are issued statewide and that might contribute to the fatigue of seeing the alerts. Brent Currence indicated they try to limit it. However, if the person is in a car and they have been missing for several hours they could be anywhere in the state. Clark Donley asked if criteria #3 could be further defined for law enforcement and the activation timeline possibly extended out 12 or 24 hours, depending on the circumstances. Brent Currence indicated it may be applicable.

Chief Harris indicated he is concerned that sometimes in the course of trying to fix a process, it can get broken. He shared everyone works really hard in Ohio to educate law enforcement and the community on the alert criteria and feels we are moving in a good direction and the process is a great one. Chief Harris shared he is concerned about destroying that based on reducing the number of Endangered Missing Adult Alerts, unless the criterias make sense. Harry Trombitas suggested this topic be considered for our next Ohio Alerts Conference.

Clark Donley recommended a checklist to assist law enforcement in locating missing persons before requesting an Endangered Missing Adult Alert. Harry Trombitas suggested if the missing person has a medical diagnosis that would put them in danger, we proceed with alert. If the missing person does not have that diagnosis, the checklist could be reviewed with law enforcement to ensure all steps to locate the person have been taken before the alert is issued. Brent Currence said he does that to a degree, but not to that extent. Rob Jackson suggested the committee seek a legal review before making more restrictive criteria other than what is listed in 5502.522. He indicated the committee may not have the authority to be more restrictive other than what is in the law. Clark Donley suggested Brent Currence and his staff put together a list of recommendations for tightening the protocol, to include committee recommendations. Captain Kocab suggested meeting with Julie Brigner, the committee's legal counsel, and possibly inviting her to the next quarterly meeting. Sheriff Myers asked Brent Currence if the committee could get a review of his statistics on the Endangered Missing Adult Alerts. Brent Currence will research to provide supporting documentation for any recommendations made.

E. Airport/Public Transit Update

Captain Kocab indicated the written proposal requested by the Cleveland Airport is pending, but a draft will be available for review at the next quarterly meeting.

Clark Donley shared COTA started sending alerts to their drivers in the Franklin County area around the first of the year and it has been well received according to the Transportation Manager. He asked if we should consider expanding into other areas and Brent Currence agreed, as many missing adults use public transit. Clark Donley will reach out to his contacts in Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Dayton.

F. AMBER Website Update

Captain Kocab shared the AMBER website has been reviewed and changes/updates were submitted to DPS-IT on January 10. The changes should be in place by the end of the month.

G. Training Update

Captain Kocab provided an update on the alert training completed since the last quarterly meeting. Training was provided to the Norton Fire Department on November 29 and to the

Bexley Police Department (community group) on January 19 by Captain Kocab, Brent Currence, and DM Lydia Frey. Both training sessions were well received. Going forward, the Mansfield Police Department and the City of Franklin have training scheduled.

H. Ohio Alert Plan

Captain Kocab indicated the recommended changes to the Ohio Alert Plan have been made and a draft copy sent to the committee for review. He asked the committee for approval. Clark Donley made the motion to adopt the Ohio Alert Plan, Harris Trombitas seconded. Motion carried by all.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee Appointments

Captain Kocab shared all committee member appointments will expire on February 6, 2017. Lindy Davis sent information to all committee members reference changes to their appointment application information and no changes were indicated. Captain Kocab said as a result, we are moving forward through our contact at DPS. Lindy Davis will follow-up and communication any updates.

B. 2017 Ohio Alerts Conference Update

Captain Kocab shared the 2017 Ohio Alerts Conference is scheduled for August 17 at the Columbus Police Academy. He provided a review of the draft agenda and indicated the next conference planning meeting is scheduled for March 10. Captain Kocab extended an invitation to the committee.

Lindy Davis inquired with Kristin Cadieux if confirmation was received for the FBI Case Studies presenter. She indicated the presenter has been confirmed and gave an overview of the planned case study presentation.

C. NCMEC Safety Central App

Captain Kocab shared with the committee there is information in their packets reference the NCMEC Safety Central app. He suggested the information be added to the AMBER and Attorney General's websites.

D. 2016 Ohio AMBER Alert Update

Captain Kocab indicated the AMBER Alert total for 2016 was six (6) counted alerts. This information was provided to NCMEC in January 2017. He shared this is the lowest total since 2003 when five (5) alerts were issued and provided a breakdown by year.

E. New Business

Brent Currence shared information about the Ohio Missing Children's Day event and invited the committee members to attend.

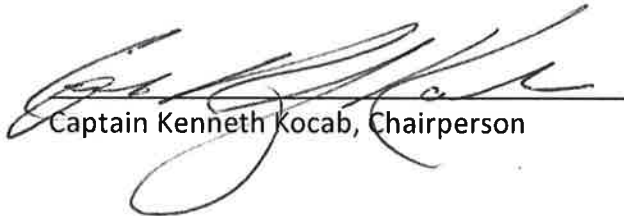
Captain Kocab shared he received an e-mail from a nurse indicating they are not allowed to carry cell phones in her facility. As a result, she does not receive the alerts. Captain Kocab indicated he may suggest she reach out to her security team and see if they have a hard e-mail which could receive alerts. If so, the facility could then disseminate. Harry Trombitas shared

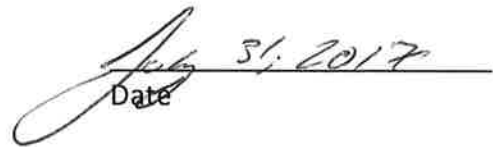
all Ohio Health hospitals receive the AMBER alert information and their officers notify emergency departments. Brent Currence suggested we reach out to a central point of contact for Ohio hospitals, similar to what was done with the transportation system. Harry Trombitas suggested contacting Central Ohio Trauma Systems (COTS). Clark Donley suggested also reaching out to the Ohio Hospital Association and Captain Kocab recommended contacting OFIS.

Rob Jackson shared the 9-1-1 Symposium will take place in September and asked if the committee would be interested in filling a session to update Ohio's alerts. Captain Kocab indicated they would be interested and asked Rob to contact him or S/Lt. Cvetan. Rob Jackson also inquired if the committee would like to participate again this year in a joint booth at the Ohio State Fair. Captain Kocab indicated we would and Rob offered to coordinate the booth.

#### V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:17 a.m. was made by Sheriff Myers, seconded by Brent Currence. Motion carried by all.

  
Captain Kenneth Kocab, Chairperson

  
Date