

# THE AMBER ADVOCATE



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ALERT**

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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## ALL THINGS AMBER AT THE 2010 NATIONAL AMBER ALERT SYMPOSIUM

The warm Arizona desert was the setting for the 2010 National AMBER Alert Symposium. Phoenix hosted AMBER Alert partners from every state, numerous tribes and territories, Canada, Mexico and the European Union on November 16-18. The annual gathering is a one-stop place for the latest information on AMBER Alerts and missing and abducted children.

Symposium participants received updates on training, technology, AMBER Alert Plans, the

Southern Border Initiative, the AMBER Alert in Indian Country Initiative, Child Abduction Response Teams and the International Initiative. The symposium included abducted child case studies and specialized classes on predatory behaviors, crisis communications, human trafficking, AMBER 101, and the Extranet, Criminal Justice Portal and distance learning opportunities. Child abduction victims and their families also shared their perspective. A full report on the symposium will be included in the next edition of The AMBER Advocate. ☺

## SURVIVING PARENTS BIKE ACROSS COUNTRY TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION

Two fathers of abducted children bicycled from New York to California to help educate the public about predatory crimes against children and young adults. Ed Smart and Ahmad Rivazfar began their journey in Rochester, New York, on August 21 and ended their 3,500 mile trek on September 22 in Los Angeles.

“Our goal was to raise awareness,” said Smart. “We had an amazing opportunity and an amazing time.”

Smart’s 14-year-old daughter Elizabeth was abducted at knife point from her Utah home in 2002. Elizabeth was held captive for 9 months before she was found alive and returned to her family. Rivazfar’s daughters, 8-year-old Sayeh and 6-year-old Sara, were abducted from their Florida home in 1988. Their mother’s boyfriend raped them and cut their throats; only Sayeh survived the attack.

“We awakened a sleeping giant,” said Rivazfar about the ride and the coalition. “Child protection is everybody’s job---not just those who have children.”

The two fathers stopped in 26 cities to promote four key issues: (1) Support state laws to allow DNA collection after a felony arrest, not just for convictions; (2) Urge Congress to fund the Protect Our Children Act of 2008; (3) Urge Congress to make funds available to maintain standards for the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act and the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act; and (4) Create a Child Safety Education Initiative to teach children how to protect themselves from violence and abuse.

“Our hope was to reach as many parents, grandparents, law enforcement officers and child advocates as we could, and we accomplished that,” said Rivazfar. “However, I did not expect to

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have so much support from those on the front lines trying to save kids."

This unlikely odyssey began years earlier when the two fathers and the parents of abducted and murdered children formed the Surviving Parents Coalition, a non-profit organization to promote education and laws to stop predatory crimes. "The thought was that we could accomplish more

working together than individually," said Smart.

On their cross-country trek, Smart and Rivazfar became close friends. Both men can tell stories about how hard it was to ride bicycles across the country, but both also said they would do it again. "I know we can accomplish much, much more," said Smart. "If we can save one child, I would ride 10 more times," added Rivazfar. ☺

## MOST CHILD ABDUCTIONS OCCUR WHEN TRAVELING TO OR FROM SCHOOLS

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) found that children are at most risk for being abducted when going to and from school or school-related activities. NCMEC analyzed more than 4,200 attempted abductions for the 5-year period from February 2005 to March 2010 and found that:

- 38 percent of attempted abductions occur while a child is walking alone to or from school, riding the school bus, or riding a bicycle.
- 37 percent of attempted abductions occur between the hours of 2:00 p.m. through 7:00

p.m. on a weekday.

- 43 percent of attempted abductions involve children between the ages of 10 and 14.
- 72 percent of attempted abduction victims are female.
- 68 percent of attempted abductions involve the suspect driving a vehicle.

The study also found most children escape attempted abductions by strangers through their own fast thinking or fierce resistance. In 16 percent of the cases, an adult stepped in to help. ☺

## LETTERS TO THE ADVOCATE

"The training that I have received through your programs has been some of the best in my career. I recently completed polygraph school, and it is my goal to use this in all investigations involving missing children cases. Thanks again for the great training!"

**Denny Deaton, Colerain, Ohio, Police Department Detective**

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the Fox Valley Technical College CART Assessors who I had the pleasure of working with recently during our mock child abduction exercise in Arkansas City, Kansas. They all were very pleasant and positive and encouraged us to continue to excel as we develop our program. I've heard nothing but very positive feedback."

**David J. Schroeder, Kansas Bureau of Investigation Special Agent in Charge**



# REAL-LIFE ISSUES PLAY OUT IN MOCK CHILD ABDUCTION IN UTAH

More than 160 law enforcement officers from 27 agencies scrambled into the South Salt Lake City, Utah, police headquarters shortly after 7:00 a.m on April 7. Each officer had received a text message that the Utah Child Abduction Response Team (CART) had been activated for a mock child abduction.

“Our goal is to find the child and apprehend the suspect,” said Utah CART Commander Jessica Farnsworth. “As this case unfolds, it is going to be just like an activation. We have a child out there who is missing, so we’re going to jump right into it.”

The mock activation was a test to see if the team conforms to the vision and protocols for national certification. The U.S. Department of Justice started the CART Initiative in November 2005.

During the test, actors played the suspect, victim, and witnesses. Members of the media were invited to get a first-hand look at what happens when a child is taken.

“Early this morning, complainant Dan Driver called and reported what he thought was a possible abduction of a small female child,” said South Salt Lake City Police Capt. Jack Carruth at the first briefing. “Two more witnesses reported an abduction of a child, and the description matched the first caller.”

Helicopters, search dogs, and every resource available to the team were used to help in the search. Utah AMBER Alert Coordinator Paul Murphy sent out flyers, e-mails, and tweets with mock abduction updates, including: “Victim is 13-yr-old, short light curly brown hair” and “Suspect 45-yr-old white male in ‘01 black Impala 4dr.”

Less than 2 hours after the alert was issued, officers found the suspect. “Get out of the car and put your hands up. Do it now!,” screamed officers at the actor/suspect. Search dogs quickly picked up the scent of the victim and found her near some trees. Investigators asked the actress/victim what happened. “He took me to this little spot and he said he was going now and not to tell anyone,” she said.

Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff stood next to police chiefs, sheriffs, and CART members and gave this assessment of the drill: “If anyone is thinking of taking a kid in this state, this is going to be the response. No matter where you are in the state, these officers are trained and will work together to find you.”

A team of inspectors led by CART Certification Coordinator Floy Turner followed the entire process and recommended that the team be certified. “It is wonderful to see the community come together and wonderful to see law enforcement work together,” noted Turner.

On August 5, AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program Director Phil Keith declared, on behalf of the Office of Justice Programs, that the Utah CART had earned certification.

“Utah has raised the standard for CART and what can be brought to the table when a child is abducted,” said Keith.

The Utah CART is the seventh team in the country and the first in the West to receive national certification. Find more information about CART and the certification process at [www.amber-net.org/training](http://www.amber-net.org/training).



ABOVE: Utah CART Commander Jessica Farnsworth BELOW: actors in the Utah CART mock activation



ABOVE: CART Program Assessor Gus Paidousis BELOW: Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff



Utah Child Abduction Response Team



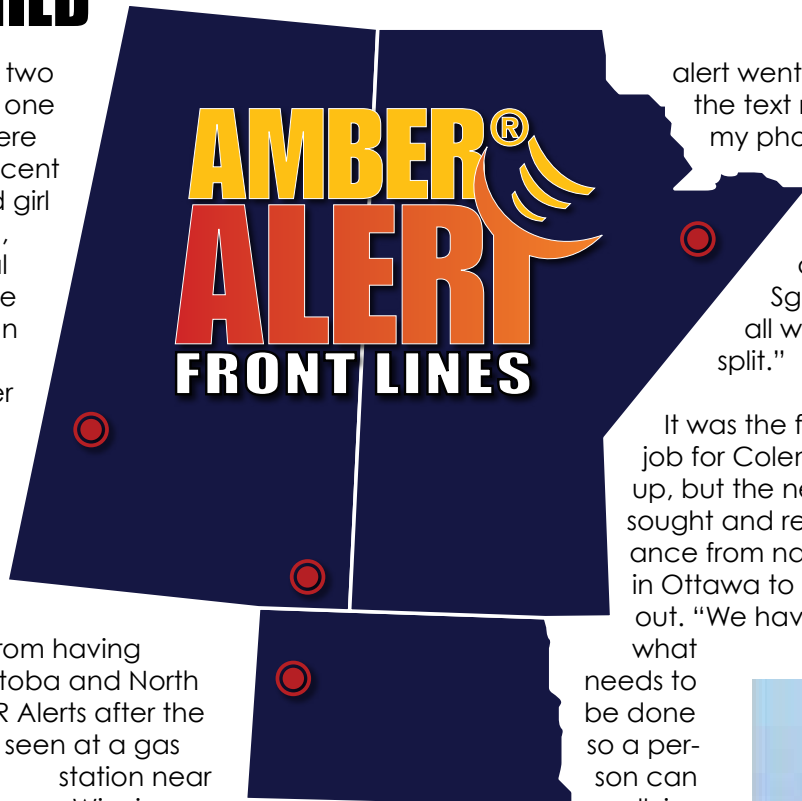
# AMBER ALERT CROSSES BORDERS TO RECOVER CHILD

The AMBER Alert plans for two Canadian provinces and one American border state were put to the test during a recent abduction of a 4-year-old girl and her mother in Regina, Saskatchewan. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Saskatchewan issued an AMBER Alert on July 6 for Samantha Martyn and her mother Natasha Sentes.

The mother and daughter went missing shortly after Sentes received a court order forbidding Christopher Martyn, the child's biological father, from having contact with them. Manitoba and North Dakota also issued AMBER Alerts after the suspect and victims were seen at a gas station near Winnipeg, Manitoba and the North Dakota border.

Twenty-five hours after Saskatchewan activated the first alert, police arrested Martyn and rescued the victims in Regina. Sentes had a broken bone near her eye from a punch thrown by the suspect. Martyn pleaded guilty in October to assault and was sentenced to 6 months in jail.

Saskatchewan AMBER Alert Coordinator Sgt. Doug Coleman was traveling in North Dakota when the



alert went out. "I received the text message on my phone, and then I turned on the radio and heard the alert as well," said Sgt. Coleman. "It all worked lickety-split."

It was the first day on the job for Coleman's back-up, but the new employee sought and received guidance from national partners in Ottawa to get the alert out. "We have a check list on

what needs to be done so a person can walk in and run

with it, but it was helpful to have assistance," said Coleman. "We are all in this together."

North Dakota AMBER Alert Coordinator Lt. Jody Skogen said he was not reluctant to issue the alert after determining it met the state's criteria and learning the suspect had a history of traveling to North Dakota. "I had no second thoughts about it," said Skogen. "We acted quickly once we found out about the threat that was posed and that they were heading to our border."

North Dakota had not issued an AMBER Alert since 2005, Saskatchewan issued its first alert in 2006, and this was the first AMBER Alert



Samantha Martyn, 4



ABOVE: Christopher Martyn

BELOW: Natasha Sentes



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# RON LANEY'S TOUGH CHILDHOOD LED TO CAREER IN PROTECTING CHILDREN

Ron Laney has spent the past 35 years leading others to do more to protect children. The Associate Administrator of OJJDP's Child Protection Division said being a victim of an abusive childhood gave him the experience and the compassion to know what needed to be done.

Laney was 12 years old when his mother took her four children, left her physically abusive husband, and then struggled to raise them on her own by working at a five-and-dime store. Laney struggled as well and had minor brushes with the law until he was arrested and charged with larceny for stealing from a local business. He spent the next 11 months in reform school.

A police officer took interest in Laney and helped him join the Marines in 1964, 6 months after he left the school. He served as an infantry platoon sergeant in Vietnam where he was wounded by rocket fire in 1969. Laney honorably served in the Marines until October 30, 1970.

"The Marine Corps gave me the discipline and the drive to make something of myself," said Laney. "That drive and experience taught me to not be afraid to make decisions. When I got out of the Marine Corps, I wanted to do something to help children."

Laney went home to get an education and went to work for the Florida Department of Juvenile Probation. He said his military background was an advantage in working with juveniles and persuading them to do the right thing. He went to work at the U.S. Department of Justice in 1976 and eventually became the coordinator for missing children programs.

In 2002, the AMBER Alert child recovery program that began as a local system in Arlington, Texas in 1996 became a nationally coordinated effort under the U.S. Department of Justice, and Laney was asked to help put it together. "We had to figure out what we were going to do and how we were going to do it," recalled Laney. "We started developing a training program and a model criteria. The goal was to have a seamless system across the country."

Along the way, Laney has won numerous awards, including a Commendation in the Congressional Record presented on July 24, 2006. In 2002, the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children created the Ronald C. Laney Distinguished Service Award for individuals who exhibit a lifetime of service to others.

"I think the most satisfying accomplishment is to know we have trained law enforcement and the media to do a better job of bringing missing and abducted children home," said Laney. "Bringing a child home safely is the biggest reward for me."

Laney does not plan to rest on his laurels. He would like to see more states create Child Abduction Response Teams and use the Endangered Missing Advisory to help child abduction cases that do not meet the AMBER Alert criteria. "The AMBER Alert criteria cover only a small percentage of children. Parents were telling me, 'What are you going to do to find my child?'" said Laney. "We are making people qualified to find our missing children. The more we fine tune the tools and resources available, the better off we will be. We want the AMBER Alert Program to be such a deterrent that people will give a second or third thought before taking a child."

Laney has a wife, two sons and is currently caring for two grandchildren. He may be famous for his work with missing children, but he is also well known for his sense of humor, his sunny disposition, and his leadership by example. Laney's lead in protecting children sets an example for all to follow. ☺



Ron Laney, Associate Administrator of OJJDP's Child Protection Division

## TAMAULIPAS JOINS AMBER ALERT NETWORK AND ESTABLISHES STATEWIDE AMBER ALERT PLAN

The Mexican state of Tamaulipas has developed a statewide AMBER Alert program, "Alerta AMBER-Tamaulipas", to help in the recovery of missing and abducted children in the state and across the U.S. – Mexico border. Tamaulipas is the second Mexican state to join the AMBER Alert network. Since it participated in the initial AMBER Alert Southern Border Initiative meeting held in San Diego, California in September of 2009, Tamaulipas has made steadfast progress in developing the necessary resources to implement a successful program.

Even though the state is currently facing unprecedented levels of violence, it has made the establishment of an AMBER Alert program one of its top priorities. In 2009 Tamaulipas appointed a State AMBER Alert Coordinator, Willy Zúñiga Castillo, who is part of the Office of the State Attorney General. Mr. Zúñiga Castillo has taken the lead in educating the me-

dia, law enforcement, public safety, health and other stakeholders and partners across the state in the importance of AMBER Alerts and the criteria required to activate an Alert. He was also responsible for coordinating specialized AMBER Alert training for state personnel from Tamaulipas. Representatives from Tamaulipas and Texas met in Brownsville, Texas in July of this year to receive joint AMBER Alert training as part of the Department of Justice's efforts to establish greater cooperation among U.S. and Mexican border states in cases involving endangered, missing and abducted children.

Under the leadership of the State Attorney General, Jaime Rodriguez Inurrigarro, and the Principal Deputy Attorney General, Hernán De La Garza Tamez, Tamaulipas has developed the operational bases for its statewide AMBER Alert program and for the development of an agreement with Texas on the issuance of AMBER Alerts. The state will also be an important resource in providing training and technical assistance to other Mexican states that wish to establish an AMBER Alert program, including the neighboring state of Nuevo León. 🇲🇽

## NUEVO LEÓN TO LAUNCH FIRST MEXICAN CHILD RECOVERY PROGRAM

The Mexican state of Nuevo León has signed on to create Mexico's first comprehensive child recovery program. The plan came after Nuevo León prosecutors, child protection officials, investigators, and legislators met in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Monterrey, Mexico, in September for the Department of Justice's AMBER Alert Southern Border Initiative.

More than 4.5 million people live in the Mexican state, which borders Texas. Nuevo León Attorney General Alejandro Garza y Garza signed an agreement on child protection related issues with the Attorney General of Texas that will be the foundation for the plan.

"We want to be able to recover children in our country," said Manuel Guzmán, an engineer with a training and education company in Monterrey, Mexico who is assisting with the development of

distance learning courses related to the AMBER Alert Southern Border Initiative. "Nuevo León is a state in transit because many people from other countries come through here to go to the United States. We have to worry about these situations and how they affect missing children."

Guzmán said the attorney general, governor, and legislators in Nuevo León will work together to establish good relationships with the border states on the issue of missing and abducted children. Efforts will also be made to educate the public and train police officers on child recovery practices.

Ron Laney, Associate Administrator of OJJDP's Child Protection Division, said Nuevo León's plan is very impressive considering the strife going on in Mexico right now. "They are at war," said Laney. "It speaks volumes that they care enough to come to a meeting to learn about protecting children. They

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# CANADIAN PROVINCE LAUNCHES FIRST AMBER ALERT FACEBOOK PAGE

When a 15-year-old girl was recently killed in a weekend car accident in New Brunswick, Canada, residents did not get the news about her death from TV, radio, or the newspaper. Most people first heard about it on Facebook. The Canadian province is very rural, broadcasters are off-air during the weekend, and the newspaper would not print a story until the following Monday.



in jeopardy by adding a Facebook page. The AMBER Alert page does not contain advertising, and people are not allowed to post comments. "We just wanted to push the message out, not take information back in," said Chadwick. "It is not a place to do research about AMBER Alert or to locate child safety information. It is just a tool to get the word out about an AMBER Alert."

Ontario and Prince Edward Island have since launched official AMBER Alert pages as well.

New Brunswick AMBER Alert Coordinator Todd Chadwick also saw the social networking site as the best way to instantly notify people when a child is abducted. "A lot of people rely on Facebook to get their local news," said Chadwick. "Our whole purpose was for quick dissemination, getting the message out as fast as possible."

New Brunswick has a population of 750,000, and Chadwick said more than two-thirds of the residents are signed up on Facebook.

However, Chadwick wanted to make sure the integrity of the AMBER Alert program was not put

An AMBER Alert has never been issued in New Brunswick, but Chadwick encourages residents to sign up for the AMBER Alert page in case it is needed. "As soon as we issue the AMBER Alert, it will immediately go to the Facebook page," said Chadwick. "They can go to the page and/or forward it to others. We can have an official message that is very powerful. So far, we have 27,000 people signed up."

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know they are looking at life and death every day, but that has not stopped their commitment to look out for children."

Baja California was the first Mexican state to establish an AMBER Alert program in May 2009, and was soon followed by the state of Tamaulipas. Jim Walters, Southern Border Initiative Liaison for Training and Technical Assistance, said Nuevo León is taking child recovery efforts a step further. "Nuevo León has started the first regional and comprehensive child recovery program in Mexico," said Walters. "They are interested in creating a program that works to recover missing, endangered and abducted children, regardless of borders."



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LEFT: Natasha Sentes' home in Saskatchewan RIGHT: Martyn was spotted at a gas station near the Manitoba - North Dakota border



for Manitoba. "It was a seamless process," said Manitoba AMBER Alert Coordinator Loren Schinkel. "It seemed to work quite well."

Even though Manitoba had never issued an alert, the province had been training and testing its plan in case an alert was needed. "Our AMBER Alert committee has been aggressive in reviewing our policies and protocols," said Schinkel.

The coordinators in all three jurisdictions said they learned from the alert. During a review, Manitoba found that the media was well prepared for the alert because advance phone calls were made. However, some AMBER Alert partners did not receive all the e-mails about the alert. "We had a little bit of a glitch in our contact system," said Coleman. "We have already fixed it, and we will do tests to make sure everything works for all our partners."

"Anytime someone can be returned safely it is a good result," noted Skogen. The North Dakota AMBER Alert Coordinator said training and tests prepared everyone for the moment. "The AMBER Alert worked flawlessly. We do annual tests and we have learned to get the request activated in just a matter of minutes."

The Manitoba AMBER Alert Coordinator learned good communication is vital, and it is helpful to have an interprovincial agreement that established: a single set of criteria for all Canadian provinces. "It is important to have a good dialogue and constant reviews of your policies and procedures to make sure you have the successful recovery of a missing child," said Schinkel. "The whole issue is recovering an abducted child safely." 🍷



North Dakota AMBER Alert Coordinator Lt. Jody Skogen



## CALIFORNIA ADDS NEW CHILD PROTECTION LAWS

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law five bills stemming from the murders of Amber Dubois and Chelsea King. Registered sex offender John Albert Gardner raped and killed the two teenage girls last spring. The laws do the following:



- Require a life sentence without the possibility of parole for forcible sex acts against minors, tightens parole guidelines and requires life-long tracking of certain sex offenders.
- Give parents the right to seal autopsy reports and photographs of their murdered children.
- Require the state to report an abduction to a national tracking system within 2 hours, instead of the current 4 hours.
- Require improved law enforcement coordination for abductions.
- Create a position of director of missing children operations. ☺

## HONORS GIVEN FOR NEW YORK TAXI AMBER ALERTS

New York City TV executives and taxi owners were recognized for bringing AMBER Alerts to the city’s 13,000 taxis and limousines. The New York State Broadcasters Association presented the awards on June 29 to recognize those who helped bring this new approach to notify the public about abducted children. The alerts appear on TV screens in the back of taxi cabs and on LED displays next to drivers. ☺



## SONGWRITER LEARNS HE WAS ABDUCTED AS A CHILD AFTER WRITING SONG ABOUT MISSING CHILDREN



Maurice Davis decided to write a song called “Missing Children” after he watched an episode of Oprah Winfrey about the issue. After writing the song, he found out his biological father had been searching for him for more than 20 years. Their birth mother took Davis and his two brothers and put them up for adoption. He was about to record the song when his brother called to inform him that he had found their father. Davis is giving 25 cents from every download of the song to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. ☺

## ILLINOIS WOMAN SUES POLICE FOR DELAYING AMBER ALERT

A mother is suing the LeRoy, Illinois, Police Department for waiting too long to issue an AMBER Alert for her two sons. Nine-year-old Duncan Leichtenberg and his 7-year-old brother Jack were found dead in March 2009. Their father, Michael Connolly, killed them before killing himself. Amy Leichtenberg claims the officers waited too long - 26 hours - to issue an AMBER Alert after she reported her sons were overdue from a custodial visit. The wrongful death suit has been moved to federal court and alleges the boys would not have been killed had the AMBER Alert been issued sooner. ☺



## ENGLAND HAS NEW LAW TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM PREDATORS



The United Kingdom has enacted “Sarah’s Law” to allow parents to check if anyone has a history of child sex offenses. The law is named after 8-year-old Sarah Payne, who was abducted and murdered by a convicted pedophile. It is similar to “Megan’s Law” in the United States, which publishes the names, addresses, and picture of sex offenders. ☺





## NORTH CAROLINA WOMAN SENT TO PRISON FOR FALSE AMBER ALERT

A North Carolina woman was sentenced to a year in prison for claiming her 3-year-old son had been abducted, which led to the issuance of a statewide AMBER Alert. In May 2008, Rosnah Hassan Thomason told authorities that her son was missing from a flea market. Authorities later found that she was not the mother of the child, and he was safe with a relative. ☺

## SCOTLAND TRIES TO STOP CHILD ABDUCTIONS

Scotland had 53 child abduction cases in 2009, including a 14-year-old schoolgirl who was forced into a car and sexually abused before being released by her captor. Scottish politicians have vowed to do more to improve the system so abducted children are recovered safely. ☺



## OKLAHOMA MAN NEARLY TRIGGERS AMBER ALERT WITH FALSE CLAIM

Tulsa, Oklahoma, police say a man lied about his 6-year-old daughter being inside his stolen truck so that law enforcement would issue an AMBER Alert. Police were about to issue the alert when Michael Hankins, under intense questioning, admitted that he made up the story to "find his truck faster." Hankins was charged with falsely encouraging an AMBER Alert and now faces up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine, plus restitution. ☺

## AUSTRALIA HOSTS MISSING CHILDREN CONFERENCE

For the first time, Australia hosted the Global Missing Children's Conference. The conference in Sydney focused on global issues facing countries when dealing with missing persons cases. The conference also focused on the growing number of parental child abduction cases and the emotional and physical implications on a child who is taken by someone they trust. ☺



## CALIFORNIA LAUNCHES COMMERCIAL MOBILE ALERT SYSTEM

The California Emergency Management Agency will now use the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) to disseminate warnings and safety information to wireless phones. The CMAS network will allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency to accept and aggregate alerts from the President of the United States, the National Weather Service, and state and local emergency operations centers. CMAS can send emergency text messages to mobile phones within a defined geographic area. ☺

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