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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin DOJ Raises Awareness of Missing Child Alerts

MILWAUKEE, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Justice is raising awareness about the importance of Wisconsin’s Missing Child Alerts as it marks more than one year since announcing these alerts, which broaden options for alerting the public to missing children.

“Too many Wisconsin families know what it’s like for a loved one to go missing,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “The Missing Child Alert has added to the tools available that can help bring kids home safely.”

Sen. LaTonya Johnson, who co-authored the bill that expanded criteria for issuing alerts for missing children, said, “The Missing Child Alert ensures that children across Wisconsin are no longer overlooked, and that their disappearances are met with the same urgency, public awareness, and state resources as those qualifying for an AMBER Alert. This alert system isn’t just a procedural change, but a lifeline for families in distress and for law enforcement working against the clock to bring children home.”

Wisconsin DOJ launched the Missing Child Alert after Governor Evers signed 2023 Wisconsin Act 272 into law in April 2024. Act 272, known as the Prince Act, was named after 5-year-old Prince McCree, who went missing in Milwaukee, and 10-year-old Lily Peters, who went missing in Chippewa Falls. The legislation expanded the criteria for issuing alerts for missing persons by including children in the statutory definition of a “person at risk.”

Missing Child Alerts are focused on alerting the public to missing children under specific circumstances.

Since the first Missing Child Alert was sent in August 2024, Wisconsin DOJ has approved and issued a total of 17 Missing Child Alerts for 14 children ages 4 through 17.

Over the same timeframe, 4 AMBER Alerts were issued for 5 children ages 4 through 16.

Missing Child Alerts are one of several types of alerts that Wisconsin DOJ may send out on behalf of local law enforcement to help locate missing persons. Others include the AMBER Alert, which rapidly disseminates information about a missing child; and the Silver Alert, which aims to protect those with Alzheimer's, dementia, or other permanent cognitive impairment who may go missing.

Additionally, local law enforcement have the authority to send out Missing Endangered Person Alerts. The Missing Endangered Person Alert is commonly used when a missing person does not meet the criteria for other specific alerts. They may also send out Green Alerts for missing veterans who have a service-related health condition.

Missing Child Alert Criteria

- The person at risk has not attained the age of 18 years, AND, the person is believed to be incapable of returning home without assistance due to a physical or mental condition or disability, OR, the person has not attained the age of 10 years, AND,
 - The individual(s) location is unknown, and
 - It is within 72 hours of the individual's disappearance, and,
 - Their situation does not qualify for another alert (e.g., AMBER Alert).
 - The individual has been entered as missing into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).
 - There is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the missing person.

Missing Child Alerts are disseminated through the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network, Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA)*, the Wisconsin Lottery terminals throughout Wisconsin, along with the Department of Transportation's Dynamic Messaging Boards.

*Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) will be sent to mobile devices up to a 5 miles radius from the last known location, between the hours of 8am-9pm.

Amber Alert Criteria

- Child must be 17 years of age or younger.
- Child must be in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
- Initiating agency must have enough descriptive information about the child, the suspect, and/or the suspect vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help locate the child.

An AMBER Alert must be requested by a local law enforcement agency and approved by Wisconsin DOJ. AMBER Alerts are activated using the Emergency Alert System (EAS) over television and radio stations; Wireless Emergency Alert broadcast directly to individual cell phones located in the broadcast area; AMBER Alert Wisconsin website; highway dynamic messaging boards; outdoor advertising digital billboards; lottery terminals; and the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network.

If a person is missing:

- Contact local law enforcement to report the person missing.
- Law enforcement will work with Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) and other law enforcement partners to assess the next steps for finding the missing person.
- DCI is the only entity that can issue a Missing Child Alert, an AMBER Alert, and a Silver Alert.
- Local law enforcement may issue a Missing Endangered Person Alert and Green Alert.

Sign Up to Receive Alerts

Sign up for the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network and receive Missing Child, AMBER, Silver, Green and Missing Endangered Person Alerts. Please visit this site to sign up for the free Wisconsin alerting system at <https://wisconsincrimealert.widj.gov/>.