



Questions and Answers

What is the Wireless AMBER Alerts™ Initiative?

The Wireless AMBER Alerts Initiative is a voluntary partnership between the wireless industry, law-enforcement agencies, and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), to distribute AMBER Alerts to wireless subscribers who opt in to receive the messages and are able to receive text messages on their wireless devices.

Why was the Wireless AMBER Alerts™ Initiative created?

Statistics show the first three hours after a child's abduction are most critical to recovering the child alive. Recognizing that wireless technology can help galvanize communities to assist law enforcement in the search for and return of the child, CTIA- The Wireless Association™, its members, its industry partners and The Wireless Foundation are excited and honored to launch the Wireless AMBER Alerts Initiative.

By combining the efforts of the wireless industry with NCMEC and law enforcement agencies, the Wireless AMBER Alerts Initiative will be a catalyst for the wireless industry's more than 182 million wireless subscribers to aid in the return of an abducted child.

What is the History of the AMBER Alert Program?

President Bush authorized the national AMBER Alert program as part of the PROTECT Act signed in 2003. The law formally established the federal government's role in the AMBER Alert program, appointing the Department of Justice (DOJ) as the agency responsible for coordinating AMBER Alerts on the national level. DOJ has officially partnered with NCMEC, authorizing them as the agent that coordinates and disseminates AMBER Alerts to secondary distributors.

AMBER stands for "America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response" and was created in 1997 when Dallas-Fort Worth broadcasters teamed with local police to develop an early warning system to find abducted children. The AMBER Alert Program was soon adopted across the nation and is a legacy to Amber Hagerman, a 9-year-old girl who was kidnapped while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas, and then murdered.

According to NCMEC, more than 200 children have been recovered since the AMBER Alert program began in 1997.

When will Wireless AMBER Alerts™ be distributed to subscribers?

NCMEC will initiate the transmission of AMBER Alerts to wireless carriers after law enforcement has issued the alert and the following criteria, recommended by the U.S. Department of Justice, have been met:

- There is reasonable belief by law enforcement that an abduction has occurred.
- The abduction is of a child age 17 years or younger.
- The law-enforcement agency believes that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.
- There is enough descriptive information about the victim and the abduction for law enforcement to issue an AMBER Alert to assist in the recovery of the child.
- The child's name and other critical data elements, including the Child Abduction flag, have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

How does the Wireless AMBER Alerts™ Initiative work?

1. An abducted child, age 17 years or younger, is reported to a local law enforcement agency.
2. If the abducted child case meets the recommended criteria, law enforcement issues an AMBER Alert and NCMEC is notified and provided with the information to include in the alert.
3. NCMEC formats the AMBER Alert message and sends it electronically to Syniverse.
4. Syniverse sends the AMBER Alert message to wireless carriers participating in the Wireless AMBER Alerts™ initiative.
5. Participating carriers send the AMBER Alert message, in text message format, to their subscribers that have opted in to receive the notices pertaining to specified geographic regions.

How can consumers receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™?

Wireless subscribers, whose wireless devices are capable of receiving text messages, may opt in to receive Wireless AMBER Alerts by registering at www.wirelessamberalerts.org or by visiting their wireless carrier's website.

When they opt in, consumers need to provide their wireless phone numbers, including area code, and designate up to five ZIP codes for which they want to receive Wireless AMBER Alerts.

IMPORTANT: Information provided by the subscriber will be used solely for the Wireless AMBER Alerts initiative and will not be shared with additional parties.

Is the Wireless AMBER Alerts™ Initiative available in all 50 states?

Yes, Wireless AMBER Alerts will be available, through participating carriers, to wireless subscribers in all 50 states.

How will opting in to receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™ affect my wireless device?

Wireless AMBER Alerts will be a text message and will appear on a subscriber's wireless device in the same manner as any other text message.

How often will I receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™?

We hope the need never arises for you to receive a Wireless AMBER Alert. Approximately 200-250 AMBER Alerts are activated across the nation each year. You will only receive an AMBER Alert if a notice is sent pertaining to the ZIP codes you designated when you opted in to the program.

Will I receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™ from all over the country?

No. Subscribers that opt in to receive Wireless AMBER Alerts will only receive AMBER Alert messages on their wireless devices if the alerts pertain to the ZIP codes they selected when they opted in to receive the alerts.

Will I only receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™ that affect the specific ZIP Codes I select?

Sometimes an AMBER Alert will be issued statewide or for an entire metropolitan area, which includes one of the ZIP Codes you have chosen. This means that you may receive an alert for an area that is larger than what might be covered by your particular ZIP Code selection.

How will I get the Wireless AMBER Alerts™ from my area?

When you register, you may designate up to five ZIP codes from which you will receive Wireless AMBER Alerts. We recommend that you at least register the ZIP Codes where you live and work.

Will I receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™ when I'm traveling?

Typically, you will receive Wireless AMBER Alerts when you are out of your home coverage area, just as you receive text messages of any kind when you are traveling. In some instances, however, your text messages cannot be forwarded to your mobile device. Regardless of where you are, you will only receive Wireless AMBER Alert notices that pertain to the ZIP Codes you selected when you opted in.

How do I know if my carrier offers Wireless AMBER Alerts™?

1. A list of participating carriers can be found on the Wireless Foundation web site at www.wirelessfoundation.org/AMBER
2. Please visit www.wirelessamberalerts.org and enter your wireless phone number to determine if your carrier is currently participating, or visit your carrier's website.

Will my carrier charge me for receiving Wireless AMBER Alerts™?

The carriers who are participating in the Wireless AMBER Alerts Initiative have entered into an agreement with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) that requires them to provide these alerts at no additional cost to consumers. Your wireless phone must be capable of receiving text messages (virtually all recent models qualify) and your service plan must include basic message receipt capability. If you have any questions, you should contact your wireless carrier.

When I sign up for Wireless AMBER Alerts™, will my information such as mobile number or email address be share with other organizations?

The Wireless Foundation will not share your information with any other organization except as required to provide the Wireless AMBER Alerts service, and we will not provide your information to any third-party marketing organizations. From time to time, the Wireless AMBER Alerts Website may contain links to other websites, including those of wireless carriers. Any information about you received by those third parties will be governed by their privacy policies.

Will I get unrelated, unwanted text messages besides AMBER Alerts if I register to receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™?

The only text messages you will ever receive from the Wireless AMBER Alerts Initiative are as follows:

- Initial AMBER Alerts that pertain to the geographic area you have selected
- Updates concerning a specific AMBER Alert
- Cancellation messages concerning a specific AMBER Alert
- Confirmation messages when you modify your Wireless AMBER Alerts profile

I received an AMBER Alert and believe I have information that could be helpful – who do I contact?

To report helpful information, you should only call the number that appears in the text of the AMBER Alert notice you receive. Do not call your wireless carrier and do not reply to the AMBER Alert message by using your keypad.

How come I did not receive an AMBER Alert on my cell phone when an alert was distributed in my area?

A vast majority of Wireless AMBER Alerts will be delivered in expeditious fashion. In some cases external factors such as local terrain, weather, network congestion or interference could delay or prevent the delivery of AMBER Alert notices.

Can you issue an AMBER Alert for my child?

To report a missing, abducted or lost child, please call your local law enforcement agency or NCMEC at 1-800-THE-LOST.

I need to report a missing child. What should I do?

To report a missing, abducted or lost child, please call your local law enforcement agency or NCMEC at 1-800-THE-LOST.

If I change my mind, how can I unsubscribe to Wireless AMBER Alerts™?

You can unsubscribe to Wireless AMBER Alerts at any time using one of the following methods:

- Go to www.wirelessamberalerts.org. Enter your wireless number and follow the directions to be removed from the Wireless AMBER Alert distribution program.
- Additional information should be available on participating carriers' websites.

If I leave my current cell phone provider and go to another company, will I still receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™ through my new carrier?

No, you must re-subscribe with your new carrier.

If I leave a carrier, where I was registered to receive Wireless AMBER Alerts™, and then return to it again, will I automatically receive the alerts?

No, you must re-subscribe each time you change from one carrier to another.

What is the difference between Wireless AMBER Alerts™ and other organizations sending alerts?

Wireless AMBER Alerts™ is the only wireless industry initiative that is in partnership with NCMEC, the organization authorized by the U.S. Department of Justice to distribute AMBER Alerts after they have been issued by law enforcement. Wireless AMBER Alerts is the work of leading wireless industry experts, using state-of-the-art wireless technology.

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