



Press Advisory

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For More Information
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Remembering Amber Hagerman and Her Legacy -- the Amber Alert Program.

In remembrance of the 9th Anniversary of the abduction and murder of Amber Hagerman, namesake for the Amber Alert program, **local expert on missing children's programs, Beth Alberts will be available for interviews** during the days prior to the January 13 anniversary date. Alberts, CEO of Houston-based Gabriel's Gifts Missing Children's Organization also serves as Director of the Houston Regional Amber Plan. The plan is administered through the offices of Gabriel's Gifts.

Gabriel's Gifts Missing Children's Organization is a not for profit organization whose mission is to provide educational information and support to help families of missing children. Alberts provides an educational/informational opportunity to your audience. During this time of international loss of children due to the catastrophic tsunami, a feature on the Amber Alert program will garner attention on safeguarding our children locally.

For more information, contact Beth Alberts at 713.521.2694.

The Department of Justice, in cooperation with John Walsh and Ed Smart, prepared three Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on AMBER Alert. These general Amber Alert PSAs are available through the AMBER Web site: www.amberalert.gov.

The Amber Alert – Why, When and How

The Amber Alert program is named for Amber Hagerman – a bright, nine-year-old child abducted while riding her bicycle outside of her Arlington, Texas home and brutally murdered. This January 13th, the 9th anniversary of Amber's abduction, is an appropriate time to review what the Amber Alert *is* and what it *is not*.

The Amber Alert *is* a very effective tool for law enforcement, through speedy notification, to enlist help in tracking down an abductor, the abductor's vehicle or the missing child. It *is* a way for the media and the general public to assist in the recovery of an innocent child and in the capture of a malicious predator.

The Amber Alert *is not* a panacea. It *will never* replace a thorough law enforcement investigation. It *will not* replace vigilant supervision of children by trusted adults, nor will it replace missing child prevention and education programs. It *will not* replace adequate prison sentences and good criminal justice supervision of probationers or parolees and, in particular, child sex offenders.

Early in 2002 there were 27 Amber Plans around the country. Now there are 99 plans in 49 states, 32 regions and 18 communities. These Amber Alert systems are credited with saving the lives of 176 children! Clearly, the program is a success, but the Amber Alert is ineffective without full participation from law enforcement, the media and caring citizens in the community.

Law enforcement officers are the *only* ones who can issue an Amber Alert for an abducted child in their jurisdictions. The criteria for issuing an Amber Alert through the Houston Regional Amber Plan system are:

1. The child is 17 years of age or younger (meaning the child is a minor under Texas state law).
2. The law enforcement agency believes the child has been abducted. (This means the child was either unwillingly taken from his/her environment without permission from the child's parent or legal guardian, or the child has been taken by the child's parent or legal guardian who also commits an act of murder or attempted murder during the time of the abduction.)
3. The law enforcement agency believes the missing child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death.
4. The law enforcement agency has conducted an investigation that has either verified the abduction or eliminated alternative explanations for the child's disappearance.
5. Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the abducted child, suspect, or the vehicle used in the abduction.

These criteria may seem narrow and often there is a demand by the family or the public to issue an alert when the circumstances *do not* meet the criteria. But the criteria are narrow for good reasons. First, it is prudent to limit the number of alerts to the most serious cases so that the Amber Alert does not become commonplace, and therefore disregarded and ineffective. Secondly, most missing children are runaways, very few are abducted, and fewer still are endangered. The National Incident Study on Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children found that approximately 115 child abductions each year in the United States are "stereotypical kidnappings" where the child is at grave risk of harm or death.

The Amber Alert *is* a critical element in the resolution of a child abduction but is only *a part* of what we must do to keep children safe. We must teach children ways to stay safer, arm parents with the tools to safeguard their children, and devote ourselves to protecting children and responding when they are endangered.

Beth Alberts

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Biographical Sketch Beth Alberts

Since March 2001, Beth Alberts has been the CEO of Gabriel's Gifts missing children's organization and became the Director of the Houston Regional Amber Plan in July 2001.

Additionally, she serves as the contact person for the Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance, a consortium of volunteer search and rescue teams and missing children's organizations providing support to law enforcement agencies and families of the missing.

Ms. Alberts has been a non-profit manager and fundraiser for almost 25 years – the last 17 in Houston. Ms. Alberts has served on the boards of many Houston children's charities, has been an active volunteer with the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast for 7 years and is a recent graduate of the FBI Citizen's Academy. Ms. Alberts teaches classes in non-profit management and fundraising.

Currently, Ms. Alberts is involved on the state, national and international levels in the effort to increase the effectiveness and consistency of Amber Alerts programs. She has developed Amber Alert Training for the regional and Statewide Plans, and has provided training to more than 1,000 law enforcement officers in 100+ agencies around the state of Texas and in the Western United States.

Ms. Alberts is a member of the National Amber Alert subcommittee to develop Missing Child Recovery Plans for the nation's law enforcement agencies. She has consulted with law enforcement agencies and Amber Plan programs around the country to ensure effective Amber Alert systems and child recovery efforts.

Ms. Alberts latest venture is providing leadership for the development of programs designed specifically to assist families during the search for their missing loved ones, and to assist victims and families after the search is over.

Ms. Alberts has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Texas and has done graduate work in Public Administration at the University of Houston.