



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Wireless AMBER Alerts™ Initiative?

The national Wireless AMBER Alerts Initiative is a voluntary partnership between the wireless industry, the United States Department of Justice, 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 recovery efforts. Recognizing that wireless technology can help galvanize communities to assist law enforcement in the search for and return of the child, the membership of CTIA-The Wireless Association, The Wireless Foundation, the United States Department of Justice and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), are honored to offer 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 nearly 200 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 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 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.

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 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (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.

Participating carriers send the AMBER Alert message, in text message format, to their subscribers that have opted in to receive the notices.

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 you provide 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, the Wireless AMBER Alerts Initiative is 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 are simple text messages and will appear on your 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 areas you designated when you opted in to the program.

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

No. Subscribers will only receive AMBER Alert messages on their wireless devices that pertain to the specific areas they identified when they opted in to receive the alerts.

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

Users can designate up to five ZIP codes from which they'd like to be alerted in the case of an AMBER Alert activation. Please note that only **one** ZIP code per city is necessary to receive Wireless AMBER Alerts for an entire city. Most states issue state-wide AMBER Alerts.

Why can I only subscribe to five ZIP Codes?

The Wireless AMBER Alerts program uses ZIP codes as the most convenient method to determine the appropriate Alerts to send to you, in the areas where you spend the most time. It's similar to when you use a web site to get a weather report for your area. Weather sites on the web ask for your ZIP code to retrieve the weather forecast that is most relevant to your general area, but they don't prepare separate forecasts for each ZIP code in the area.

In many cases, AMBER Alert Coordinators issue state-wide alerts. In other cases, AMBER Alerts are issued on a regional basis. So, by selecting just your home ZIP code, you will receive all AMBER Alerts that pertain to your community.

Some people travel extensively and routinely cross into other states. That's where the option to enter as many as five ZIP codes can be helpful. In this way, travelers can receive AMBER Alerts for several different areas, so someone who commutes to Chicago from Milwaukee, or who flies to New York from Atlanta often, has the option to receive AMBER Alerts in more than one area.

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 rare 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 areas you selected when you opted in.

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

You can enter your ten-digit wireless phone number on the subscription page to determine if your carrier is participating. Or you can check the latest listing of participating wireless carriers at <http://www.wirelessfoundation.org/amber/carriers.cfm>.

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.

Will my carrier charge me for receiving Wireless AMBER Alerts?

No. The carriers who are participating in the Wireless AMBER Alerts Initiative have entered into an agreement with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 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.

Do you share information such as mobile number or email address with any other organizations?

No. 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. To review the Wireless AMBER Alerts web site privacy policy at <http://www.wirelessfoundation.org/amber/privacypolicy.cfm>

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

No. 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?

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

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 expedient 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 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 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 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 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 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 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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1-800-THE-LOST
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