



Mid-Ohio AMBER Alert Launches Back-To-School Campaign

What: Press Conference

When: Monday, August 15
9:30 AM

Where: Columbus Division of Police Training Academy
1000 N. Hague Avenue (I-70 West to Hague Ave. exit)

Who: Mike Rankin, Founder, Mid-Ohio AMBER Alert (614.361.1622)
Dep. Chief Antone Lanata, Columbus Police Division
Sgt. Brent Mull, CPD (614.645.4593)

Columbus -- Believing the start of the school year should be a safe and positive experience for all students, the Mid Ohio AMBER Alert Board of Directors, local law enforcement authorities and the Franklin County AFL-CIO are joining forces to remind parents, teachers and others to discuss safety with school-age children and learn more about preventing child abductions.

"This is a time for parents, caregivers and educators to review with children of all ages the basics of how to ensure their safety, from traffic safety to avoiding situations where others would seek to abduct or lure them into their vehicles," said Mike Rankin, MOAA co-founder.

Mid Ohio Amber Alert, with the help of area law enforcement and the Franklin County AFL-CIO, is distributing thousands of AMBER Alert static stickers for autos, homes, schools and businesses. The stickers can be placed in windshields, windows or doors and are available at area police stations and 85 AFL-CIO offices. These small static stickers provide valuable information to anyone on what to do when a child is missing or abducted. We encourage people to visit our website at www.midohioamberalert.com and the National Center for Missing Children's website at www.missingkids.com for detailed information on child safety.

MOAA is also encouraging its broadcast partners to air public-service announcements from August 15-September 22 to inform the public about AMBER Alert, the danger of child abductions and the resources available to prevent them and recover missing children. Mr. Rankin and Sgt. Mull can be available to tape messages after the news conference or by appointment. PSAs from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, featuring John Walsh and Ed Smart, are available from MOAA.

AMBER Alert is a cooperative system between law enforcement, broadcasters, transportation officials and other providers for notifying the public in the event a child is abducted and at risk of being injured or killed. AMBER Alerts are emergency messages broadcast when police determine that a child has been abducted and is in imminent danger. Information which could lead to the safe recovery of an abducted child is broadcast by radio and television stations, posted on highway message signs and distributed to wireless technology users. This information may include physical descriptions of the child and suspect, information about the abductor's vehicle, and possible routes of travel.

Last year in Ohio, 31 Ohio children were recovered alive by the timely broadcasting of information on these abducted children and their abductors by radio and television stations and Ohio Department of Transportation Variable Message Signs.

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The AMBER Alert Plan was created in 1997 in honor of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, who was kidnapped and murdered while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas. Founded in 2001, MOAA was one of the first regional AMBER Alert programs in Ohio, and is now recognized as the regional AMBER Alert Plan for Franklin, Delaware, Licking, Fairfield, Pickaway, Madison, Union, Muskingum, Perry, Hocking, and Fayette counties. The goal of the organization is to *keep our Mid Ohio communities safer for our children by trying to educate law enforcement officials, the news media and general public on the AMBER Alert system; and better inform and enlist help from the general public when a child is missing and in danger of serious physical harm or death.*

For more information on Mid-Ohio AMBER Alert visit www.midohioamberalert.org or call Mike Rankin at 614 361-1622. For information on the Ohio AMBER Plan, contact C.J. Couch, Ohio Department of Public Safety at 614 799-3691.

Facts about abducted children-

-A 1997 study by the State of Washington's Office of the Attorney General shows that – in cases where children were abducted and murdered – 74% of them were killed within three hours of their abduction. Another study shows that parents, on average, wait 2 hours before reporting their child missing to police.

-The US Dept. of Justice says, in 1999, 58,200 children were abducted by non-family members:
37% were abducted by strangers, 53% by persons known to the victim (38% of those were abducted by a friend or long acquaintance).

-The same study showed 115 children were the victims of the most serious, long-term non-family abductions called "stereotypical kidnappings" – 40% of victims of "stereotypical kidnappings" are killed. Nearly half of victims of all non-family abductions & stereotypical kidnappings are sexually assaulted.

-Children are typically abducted from streets, parks or wooded, easily accessible areas. Only 23% were abducted from their homes or yards. (source: Us Dept. of Justice NISMART-2, 2002)

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