



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDERS



510.03

PUBLIC ALERTS AND WARNINGS

08-26-2026

PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish procedures for alerting the public to important information using the Community Emergency Notification System and Emergency Alert System.

POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Sacramento Police Department to promote public safety by facilitating a variety of public alerts and warning notifications between the community and public safety service providers.

PROCEDURE

A. DEFINITIONS

1. COMMUNITY EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM (CENS) – An automated communication platform maintained by the Sacramento County office of Emergency Services utilized by the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) to send emergency messages to specific geographic areas as well as to registered persons during a critical event.
2. SAC-ALERT – A message sent using CENS.
3. POC –The Police Operations Center.
4. EOC –The City of Sacramento Emergency Operations Center.
5. MOU – A memorandum of understanding between Sacramento County and participating agencies.
6. USER AGREEMENT – Guidelines established for CENS participating agencies located at the SPD Communications Center.
7. GEO ZONE – A specific and geographically defined area.
8. EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM (EAS) – A national public warning system that may be used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information, such as alerts targeted to persons within specific areas.
9. AMBER ALERT – A public alert issued in child abduction cases. Child abduction cases that meet specified criteria require an Amber Alert.
10. BLUE ALERT – A public alert which may be issued when a violent attack on a law enforcement officer has occurred and a search for the suspect is active. Blue Alerts provide immediate information to the public to prevent further harm and aid in the swift apprehension of the suspect.
11. SILVER ALERT – A public alert which may be issued when a person 65 years of age or older, developmentally disabled, or cognitively impaired, has been reported missing and is determined to be at-risk.
12. ENDANGERED MISSING ADVISORY – A public advisory that may be issued when a person who is at risk, developmentally disabled, or cognitively impaired, or who has been abducted, is reported missing.
13. FEATHER ALERT – A public alert which may be issued when an indigenous person has been reported missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances.
14. EBONY ALERT – A public alert that may be issued when Black youth, including young women and girls, are reported missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances, at risk, developmentally disabled, or cognitively impaired, or who have been abducted.
15. YELLOW ALERT – A public alert which may be issued under certain conditions when a person



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has suffered serious bodily injury or been killed in a hit and run incident.

B. CENS ACCESS LEVEL

1. ALL ACCESS DISPATCHER – The CENS user's access level shall be such that their privileges allow baseline operational activation and control of an event.
2. ORGANIZATION ADMINISTRATOR – The CENS supervisor's access level shall include all functions allowed to the system user, with additional capabilities to add or modify user access levels, perform minor updates to system databases, and run statistical reports as required.
3. ACCOUNT ADMINISTRATOR – The CENS administrator's access level shall include all functions allowed to the system supervisor, with the added ability to delete user access levels, perform system database updates, perform compliance audits and other event statistical reports, back-up system operations, and perform higher level functions common to system administrators.

C. GENERAL

1. CENS shall only be used for official public safety and/or emergency notifications including, but not limited to:
 - a. Community evacuations or recommended action instructions for critical events, such as natural or man-made disasters.
 - b. Crime alerts providing urgent information pertaining to public safety with the intent of protecting lives and property.
 - c. Missing persons in imminent danger, in conjunction with other types of public alerts (e.g., AMBER ALERT, SILVER ALERT, ENDANGERED MISSING ADVISORY, FEATHER ALERT, EBONY ALERT, YELLOW ALERT), when appropriate.
 - d. Other types of time-critical messages deemed an emergency by the approving authority.
2. The system may be used for non-emergency or public service announcements; however, the 911 telephone data shall not be used for these types of notifications.
3. Prohibited uses of CENS include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Notifications to neighborhoods regarding meetings or public events.
 - b. Political messages.
 - c. Notifications regarding minor incidents or missing persons where no immediate threat of death or injury to the missing party or the community is evident.
4. Only agencies that are parties to the operative MOU shall use CENS.
5. Each participating agency shall have organization administrators and fully-trained personnel.

D. SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT USE OF CENS

1. Division commanders or watch commanders requesting to use CENS shall contact a supervising dispatcher, dispatcher III, or designee, to:
 - a. Coordinate the GEO ZONE for the Sac-Alert.
 - b. If necessary, initiate the cancellation or termination of a Sac-Alert.
2. The Communications Division shall:
 - a. Make appropriate notifications of the outgoing Sac-Alert and other notifications to the watch commander and district sergeant.
 - b. If an incident is not already active, enter a CAD incident.
 - c. Send a Sac-Alert at the direction of either the chief of police, a division commander, or watch commander.
 - d. Evaluate staffing at the Communications Center and call in any additional personnel to the POC or EOC as directed.
 - e. If necessary, dedicate a radio channel.
3. After sending a Sac-Alert, the Communications Division shall send a management notification and an email to [REDACTED] detailing the:



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- a. Circumstances of the request.
- b. GEO ZONE of the Sac-Alert.
- c. Approving authority.

E. OTHER CITY DEPARTMENT USE OF CENS

1. Requests from other City of Sacramento departments to send a Sac-Alert shall only be authorized by management within that department.
2. The Communications Division manager or watch commander shall be the approving authority to distribute a Sac-Alert on behalf of another city department.

F. CENS ADMINISTRATION

1. Selected Communications Division personnel shall be designated as system administrators of CENS.
2. System administration shall:
 - a. Ensure the proper maintenance of the database.
 - b. Review all Sac-Alerts for accuracy and content.
 - c. Track all Sac-Alerts initiated by SPD.

G. SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT USE OF EAS

1. In addition to CENS, SPD has the ability to provide information to the public by requesting the activation of EAS for public alerting in specified circumstances as defined in the California Government Code.
2. All requests for activation of EAS in missing persons investigations (Amber Alert, Endangered Missing Advisory, Silver Alert, Feather Alert, and Ebony Alert) shall be made in compliance with General Order 533.02 (Missing Persons Cases-Reporting/Investigating).
3. All requests for activation of EAS shall be made through the watch commander.
4. The watch commander, or designee, shall confer with the appropriate Investigations Section lieutenant prior to initiating an EAS activation.
5. The State of California, acting through the California Highway Patrol (CHP), is responsible for the activation of EAS for public alerting for the following incidents that meet the criteria specified below:
 - a. AMBER Alerts
 - b. BLUE Alerts
 - c. SILVER Alerts
 - d. ENDANGERED MISSING Advisories
 - e. FEATHER Alerts
 - f. EBONY Alerts
 - g. YELLOW Alerts
6. The CHP Emergency Notification and Tactical Alert Center (ENTAC), located at CHP Headquarters, is staffed 24 hours a day and is responsible for activation of all alerts on behalf of California investigating agencies. Request for EAS alerts should be directed to the ENTAC at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].
7. In addition to EAS, CHP deploys a variety of alert tools including Changeable Message Signs (CMS) on freeways, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), and social media.
8. AMBER Alert Criteria (Government Code § 8594)
 - a. Requires that a law enforcement agency shall, absent extenuating investigative needs, request activation of the EAS within the appropriate local area if all the following criteria are met:
 - (1) A child has been abducted or taken by anyone, including but not limited to, a custodial parent or guardian.
 - (2) The victim is 17 years of age or younger or has a proven mental or physical disability.
 - (3) The victim is in imminent danger of serious injury or death.



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- (4) There is information available that, if provided to the public, could assist in the child's safe recovery.
- 9. BLUE Alert Criteria (Government Code § 8594.5)
 - a. A law enforcement agency may request a Blue Alert if the following criteria are met:
 - (1) A law enforcement officer has been killed, suffers serious bodily injury, or is assaulted with a deadly weapon and the suspect has fled the scene of the offense.
 - (2) A law enforcement agency investigating the offense has determined that the suspect poses an imminent threat to the public or other law enforcement personnel.
 - (3) A detailed description of the suspect's vehicle or license plate is available for broadcast.
 - (4) Public dissemination of available information may avert further harm or accelerate apprehension of the suspect.
- 10. SILVER Alert Criteria (Government Code § 8594.10)
 - a. A law enforcement agency may request a Silver Alert if all the following criteria are met:
 - (1) The missing person is 65 years of age or older, developmentally disabled, or cognitively impaired.
 - (2) The investigating law enforcement agency has utilized all available local resources.
 - (3) The law enforcement agency determines that the person has gone missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances.
 - (4) The law enforcement agency believes that the person is in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, environment or weather conditions, the person is in the company of a potentially dangerous person, or other factors indicating that the person may be in peril.
 - (5) There is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the missing person.
- 11. ENDANGERED MISSING Advisory (Government Code § 8594.11)
 - a. A law enforcement agency may request an Endangered Missing advisory if all the following criteria are met:
 - (1) The missing person is developmentally disabled, cognitively impaired, has been abducted, or is unable to otherwise care for themselves, placing their physical safety at risk.
 - (2) The investigating law enforcement agency has utilized all available local resources.
 - (3) The law enforcement agency determines that the person has gone missing under unexplainable or suspicious circumstances.
 - (4) The law enforcement agency believes that the person is in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, or environment or weather conditions, that the person is in the company of a potentially dangerous person, or that there are other factors indicating that the person may be in peril.
 - (5) There is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the missing person.
- 12. FEATHER Alert Criteria (Government Code § 8594.13)
 - a. A law enforcement agency may request a Feather Alert if all the following criteria are met:
 - (1) The missing person is an indigenous woman or an indigenous person.
 - (2) The investigating law enforcement agency has utilized available local and tribal resources.
 - (3) The law enforcement agency determines that the person has gone missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances.
 - (4) The law enforcement agency believes that the person is in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, or environment or weather conditions, that the person is in the company of a potentially dangerous person, or that there are other factors indicating that the person may be in peril.



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- (5) There is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the missing person.

13. EBONY Alert Criteria (Government Code § 8594.14)

- a. A law enforcement agency may request an Ebony Alert if all the following criteria are met:
 - (1) The missing person is a Black youth between 12 to 25 years of age, inclusive.
 - (2) The missing person suffers from a mental or physical disability.
 - (3) The person is missing under circumstances that indicate any of the following:
 - (a) The missing person's physical safety may be endangered.
 - (b) The missing person may be subject to trafficking.
 - (c) The law enforcement agency determines that the person has gone missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances.
 - (4) The law enforcement agency believes that the person is in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, or environment or weather conditions, that the person is in the company of a potentially dangerous person, or that there are other factors indicating that the person may be in peril.
 - (5) The investigating law enforcement agency has utilized available local resources.
 - (6) There is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the missing person.

14. YELLOW Alert Criteria (Government Code § 8594.15)

- a. A law enforcement agency may request a Yellow Alert if all the following criteria are met:
 - (1) A person has been killed due to a hit-and-run incident.
 - (2) There is an indication that a suspect has fled the scene utilizing the state highway system or is likely to be observed by the public on the state highway system.
 - (3) The investigating law enforcement agency has additional information concerning the suspect or the suspect's vehicle, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
 - (a) The complete license plate number of the suspect's vehicle.
 - (b) A partial license plate number and additional unique identifying characteristics, such as the make, model, and color of the suspect's vehicle, which could reasonably lead to the apprehension of a suspect.
 - (c) The identity of a suspect.
 - (4) Public dissemination of available information could either help avert further harm or accelerate apprehension of a suspect based on any factor, including, but not limited to, the time elapsed between a hit-and-run incident and the request or the likelihood that an activation would reasonably lead to the apprehension of a suspect.