

Roles and Responsibilities



California Highway Patrol

The California Highway Patrol (CHP), Emergency Notification and Technical Alert Center (ENTAC) is responsible for providing statewide coordination of the California Child Safety Amber Network (CCSAN), which includes AMBER Alert.

The ENTAC has a critical role in AMBER Alerts. In conjunction with initiating law enforcement agencies, the ENTAC coordinates all multi-regional and statewide activations of EAS and is available to assist agencies with EAS activation on a more localized, regional basis, if necessary. Additionally, the ENTAC serves critical support functions in a wide variety of areas, including the Changeable

Message Signs (CMS) system on California's highways, EDIS bulletins, poster/flyer development and distribution, administration of child abduction prevention programs, and other emergency response activities. To request assistance, agencies should call ENTAC at (916) 657-8287. ENTAC is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



With the Emergency Alert System (EAS) being the focal point of AMBER Alert activations, it is important that local law enforcement agencies have a clear understanding of the value and potential of this resource in child recovery efforts.

Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a federal communications system designed to inform the public in the event of a civil emergency. EAS messages, when accepted by participating radio and television stations, pre-empt local programming and are preceded and concluded with distinctive alert tones. The EAS can be activated on either a regional or statewide basis. For purposes of EAS administration, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) currently has divided California into 22 areas based on media markets. Each of these areas has a Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC), which prepares plans for the use of the EAS and distributes EAS equipment to media outlets authorized to relay EAS messages. Local agencies only have the ability to send an EAS message to a pre-designated local primary radio station (LP-1) within their own FCC area. Although other local radio and television stations are required to monitor EAS messages transmitted by the LP-1, they are not required to re-broadcast the message. The development of regional/local plans will help solidify communication and institute agreements as to when broadcasts can be expected.

It is important to note that when activating an EAS Alert from a government EAS encoder and station, and depending on the Event Code used, the originator is “taking control” of radio and television broadcast air at that time and, in essence, is operating as a broadcaster. Agencies should be familiar with basic broadcast script procedures before attempting to originate an EAS alert using government-owned EAS encoders. Local broadcasters, in accordance with the Local EAS Plan, are ready to assist agencies with activating the EAS.

In child abduction cases, activation of the EAS at the local LP-1 covers only the local broadcasting area. To activate the EAS on a multi-regional or statewide basis, the local law enforcement agency must contact the CHP's ENTAC, which has installed EAS equipment in all of its 24 Communications Centers.

Note: To ascertain local LECC procedures and receive contact information on media agencies authorized to relay local EAS messages, all law enforcement agencies are encouraged to contact their LECC local emergency manager.



Governor's Office of Emergency Services

The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) oversees the statewide operations of the Emergency Digital Information Service (EDIS), which effectively augments the EAS as an emergency public notification system in AMBER Alerts.

Emergency Digital Information Service

The Emergency Digital Information Service (EDIS) enables government agencies to electronically disseminate urgent text information, images and audio files to law enforcement and media outlets statewide. EDIS messages originate from various sources such as the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS), National Weather Service, the U.S. Geological Survey and major utility companies. EDIS performs several important functions in AMBER Alerts:

- EDIS enables CLETS messages regarding child abductions to be programmatically forwarded to law enforcement and media outlets statewide. The messages must contain specific wording in the header for computerized processing through the OES message switching system. (See instructions in Section 2 of this Manual).



When sending CLETS messages to EDIS in relation to an AMBER Alert, one of two EDIS bulletin types should be used:

EDIS FLASH — Immediate life-safety warnings only. ***This type is to be used for actual AMBER Alert broadcasts.***

EDIS TEST — To verify readiness of EDIS systems. Each agency should issue no more than two test bulletins per month. If more extensive testing is required, this should be first cleared with the OES EDIS Project Office at (800) 241-2921.

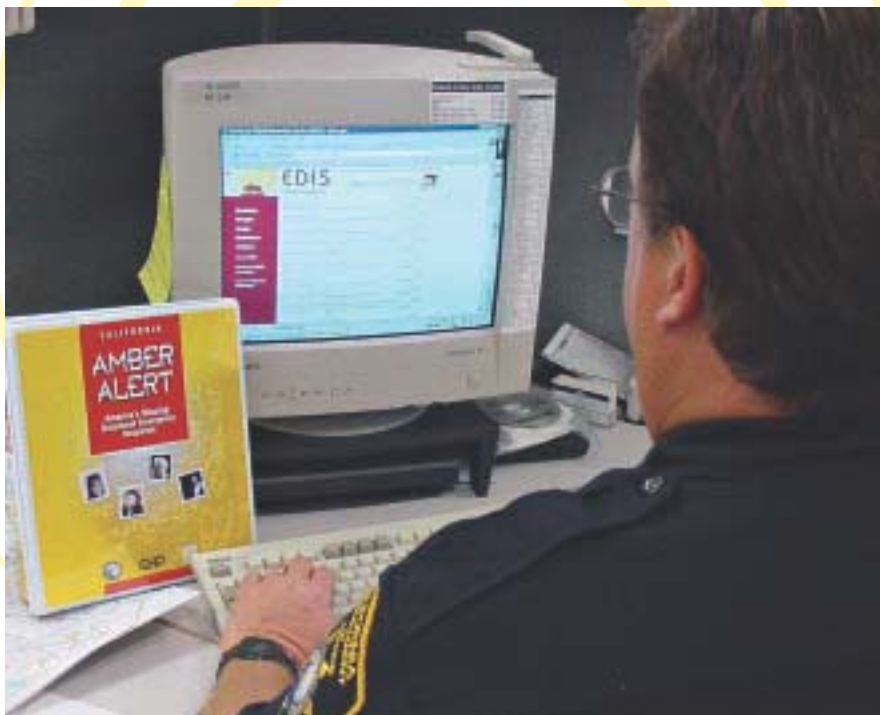
EDIS text messages are distributed through the following means:

- **Digital radio ("packet") broadcasts** in metropolitan areas (including Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, and Sacramento)
- **Direct satellite broadcast** to key newsrooms and county Emergency Operations Centers statewide
- **E-mail** (direct from OES for priority agencies and media, via nonprofit and commercial forwarding services for other agencies, media and the public)
- **Pager and wireless services** via the State's wireless portal service and commercial providers
- **Internet "XML" feed** (experimental) using the "Common Alerting Protocol"
- **On demand from the EDIS Web Site**

Note: EDIS should not be used in place of regular CLETS broadcast messages to law enforcement.

- EDIS includes a web site that allows law enforcement to quickly create and store child abduction posters on the Internet. This web site provides rapid dissemination of information and quality images to the media and the public.
- EDIS automatically notifies law enforcement agencies via CLETS when a poster has been created. Media agencies are also notified via EDIS message relay systems.

The OES does not monitor, edit or modify information submitted for posting to the EDIS Web site. Sole responsibility for all content lies with the originating agency. **All information submitted to EDIS is distributed directly to the media and the public and is also available on the EDIS Web Site.**





Local Law Enforcement Agencies

Local law enforcement agencies are responsible for developing comprehensive AMBER Alert Plans that detail the response procedures and protocols specific to their jurisdictions. Following are key elements that should be addressed in developing and maintaining an effective local AMBER Alert Plan:

1. Establishing Emergency Management Relationships and Protocols

Assembly Bill 415 (Government Code section 8594) requires law enforcement agencies to activate the EAS to facilitate urgent media broadcasts when warranted in child abduction cases. To ensure proper activation of the EAS, law enforcement agencies must first establish written policies, procedures, and protocols in conjunction with designated media representatives. As the first step in this process, each agency should contact its LECC Chairman to identify the assigned local primary radio station (LP-1). Agreements must be established with the LP-1 regarding the broadcasting and relaying of EAS messages originated by the agency.

Since an emergency alert plan is a complex and unique partnership between law enforcement and local broadcasters, it is vital that a strong working team be created. Law enforcement agencies should meet with representatives from the local media markets to discuss their respective roles and reach agreements on expectations and response. Many agencies choose to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize such plans.

Radio and television participation is voluntary and provided as a public service. Therefore, it is essential that law enforcement maintain good communications with local media and include them as a vital part of any local/regional AMBER Alert Plan to better ensure the plan is successful.

2. Establishing an EDIS Account

Before using the EDIS Web Site to create a child abduction poster, agencies must establish an EDIS user account. Requests for a user account must be submitted on agency letterhead to the EDIS Project Office at:

State of California
Governor's Office of Emergency Services
EDIS Program
P.O. Box 419047
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9047

Each request should include the following information:

- Agency name
- Contact name
- Contact telephone number
- Contact e-mail address
- Contact fax number
- Contact 24-hour telephone number
- A brief description of the agency's law enforcement jurisdiction
- The following paragraph:

"The applicant agrees that it will be solely responsible for any information posted using its EDIS account, for appropriate use of the system, and for protection of the security of its account information including user name and password. Applicant will change its password on a regular basis using the provided on-line tool."

Once the information has been verified, the requesting agency will receive an EDIS user ID and password, along with operational instructions.

3. AMBER Alert Criteria

After receiving a report of a child abduction, agencies must conduct a preliminary investigation and determine if the AMBER Alert activation criteria, as specified in Government Code 8594, have been met. ***All of the following conditions must apply:***

- ✓ **It has been confirmed that an abduction has occurred.**
- ✓ **The victim is 17 years of age or younger, or of proven mental or physical disability.**
- ✓ **There is reason to believe the victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.**
- ✓ **There is information available that, if disseminated to the general public, could assist in the safe recovery of the victim.**

For purposes of an AMBER Alert, child abduction is defined as an incident in which a child is reported to be involuntarily missing from the person(s) having care-taking responsibilities for the

child. Absent an eyewitness to the abduction, agencies should have reliable evidence that the child's disappearance was not voluntary.

AMBER Alert should **not be** used for cases involving runaways, missing children in which there is no evidence of foul play or custody disputes that are not reasonably believed to endanger the life or physical health of a child.

Cases not meeting AMBER Alert criteria

EAS should be activated only in those child abduction cases meeting the mandatory AMBER Alert criteria. In cases that do not meet these criteria, agencies should continue to exercise discretion in determining which of the many other tools available would be the most appropriate for transmitting information and photos to other officers, the media and the public.

Agencies can still notify the media of such cases by using other standard news procedures, such as press releases or phone contact, or by transmitting an EDIS bulletin via CLETS, using a priority level lower than FLASH, such as URGENT or NEWS. (For more information on these priority levels, visit the EDIS Web Site at www.edis.ca.gov.)

4. Establishing A Call Center

It is likely that the broadcast of an AMBER Alert will immediately generate a high volume of calls from the public. Therefore, any telephone number given out by law enforcement should be adequately staffed and able to handle a high volume of calls simultaneously.

5. Agency Training

The activation of AMBER Alert requires that designated agency personnel immediately execute pre-defined tasks in a coordinated and efficient manner. Therefore, it is essential that all personnel who potentially have a role in an activation are thoroughly trained in their assigned functions. Such training should be conducted regularly, particularly to ensure the preparedness of any newly assigned personnel.

6. Testing

Local agencies should regularly test and rehearse activation procedures in conjunction with other involved entities. This ensures that all affected individuals and organizations are clearly aware of their assigned roles and have the necessary resources available during an activation.

Media Agencies

In most news organizations, a report of a child abduction is considered a breaking story. Prior to the activation of an AMBER Alert, each radio and television station is encouraged to develop a coordinated plan that brings together the engineering, production, talent, and newsgathering departments. The broadcast community does not participate in the specific decision-making process that triggers a particular AMBER Alert. However, the voluntary cooperation of radio and television stations is critical to the success of AMBER Alert, inasmuch as they are California's primary visual and audio connections to California's residents on a daily basis. Media agencies should address the following functions when developing plans in conjunction with law enforcement:



1. Receiving EAS Messages

The EAS message will be relayed from the law enforcement agency through the LP-1 to designated media outlets via the EAS "decoder," which receives the message in an audio format, not as printed text. To receive a text message, media agencies should also employ EDIS and one of its associated message-forwarding systems. Without the text message, station personnel must transcribe the audio message for re-broadcasting. Transcription is not necessary if the station sets its EAS equipment to automatically override current programming and broadcast the transmitted audio message.

2. Responding to EAS Messages

Time is crucial in a child abduction case; the faster the information is broadcast to the community, the better the chance for a successful recovery. Therefore, each radio and television station needs to establish proper procedures for quickly handling information received as part of an AMBER Alert.

Currently, when a child is abducted, broadcasters in many areas are using the EAS under the Civil Emergency Message event code that all stations are programmed to receive (contact OES at <http://eas.oes.ca.gov> for event code changes). Primary stations transcribe EAS messages and broadcast the alert "live" through the EAS to area broadcast stations. Messages are disseminated simultaneously to all participating radio and television stations regardless of the format or time of day. Each station monitors at least one of the EAS stations on its receivers.

The primary radio and television stations activate the EAS by sending out three digital tones, followed by a distinctive AMBER Alert tone. The broadcaster then provides summary information regarding the abduction and any other pertinent details provided by law enforcement.

Following transmission of the message, three digital data tones are sent to terminate the message. The audio message from the EAS stations simultaneously reaches each EAS receiver at participating radio and television stations area-wide. Procedures for interrupting programming will vary according to station policy and the local-area EAS Plan.

Stations may program their EAS equipment to automatically interrupt programming or may choose to transcribe the alert and rebroadcast the message using an anchor/ reporter. If a station decides to transcribe the alert, a system needs to be established within each news division to handle the transcription, since the EAS message is transmitted to the station only once.

If stations are in the middle of a newscast, the anchor/reporter can immediately break in with AMBER Alert information. If the Alert comes into the station during regular programming, a television station may create a “crawl” that would be displayed on the screen containing vital information about the abduction.

3. Monitoring the EDIS

Law enforcement agencies will have access to the EDIS to disseminate text, as well as images (photographs or sketches) of the abducted child, the suspect(s), and/or vehicle(s). Posters relating to an AMBER Alert may be displayed on the EDIS Web Site and will become available to the media and the public as soon as the investigating agency is able to scan and load the image(s) and fill out the poster template. This could take place within 15 minutes of the first emergency message. Information regarding availability of the poster is distributed as soon as the poster is created. (Also see the EDIS information within the OES section of this Manual.)

4. Handling Calls from the Public

If viewers or listeners call the media in response to an AMBER Alert, media staff should refer the callers to the appropriate local law enforcement agency contact number(s). If a member of the public calls to activate an AMBER Alert, the caller should be informed that the decision to activate an AMBER Alert can only be made by the appropriate law enforcement agency.



F.C.C. EAS Local Areas

