

# Amber Alerts Now On Facebook

**Teresa Baker, Idaho State Police**

Today, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children announced a partnership with Facebook to send AMBER Alerts to the social network's community to help find missing children.

The new initiative will deliver AMBER Alerts to people's News Feeds in targeted search areas after a child has been abducted and the National Center has issued an alert.

"When a child goes missing the most important thing we can do is to get the detailed information to the public as quickly as possible," says Dawn Peck, Idaho State Police Bureau of Criminal Identification Manager who serves as the Idaho AMBER Alert Coordinator. "The first few hours are critical in the search for an abducted child and we welcome any tool that assists in the recovery a child."

For most people, these alerts will be rare because they will only go to people who are in a position to help - those specifically within the designated search area. If you get an alert on Facebook it means there is an active search for an abducted child going on in your area. The alert will provide the critical information you need to potentially help reunite a child with his or her family.

People have already been using Facebook to help find missing children. The National Center reports that last year, an 11-year-old girl was safely recovered after a South Carolina motel employee recognized a photo of the girl in an AMBER alert she saw on Facebook. The woman called the police, and the child was found unharmed. It's an amazing word-of-mouth efforts like this that inspired Facebook to develop a more systematic way to help find missing children.

Here's how Facebook will complement existing AMBER Alert distribution systems:

- Reach - Facebook's distribution system will get the AMBER Alert to everyone who is logged into Facebook on either their mobile device or desktop during the alert if they are within the designated search area as specified by law enforcement.

- Detailed Information - The alert will include any important details about the child such as a photo, names and descriptions, location of the abduction, a license plate number and any other information that can be provided to the public to aid in the search for the missing child.

- Share - The Facebook system enables people to share the alert with friends and link to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children for the most up-to-date information about the case.

"The alert on Facebook appear in News Feed will not trigger any notifications to a person's phone but the AMBER Alert system itself may activate the notifications with an alarm to mobile phones in the search area," says Peck. "In Idaho we have

not had many alerts but some may remember the tone from their phone the first time it was activated in August 2013 during the search for Hannah Anderson."

AMBER Alerts are a child abduction alert system that started in the United States in 1996. AMBER stands for America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response and was named for Amber Hagerman, a 9-year-old abducted and murdered in Arlington, Texas.

AMBER Alert in Idaho is a program of voluntary cooperation between broadcasters, cable systems, and local and state agencies to enhance the public's ability to assist in recovering abducted children. The Idaho State AMBER Alert Advisory and Review Committee oversees the AMBER Alert process flow, agency responsibilities, and after action review.

The decision to declare an AMBER Alert is made by the police organization investigating the abduction when the agency determines that a child was abducted and is in imminent danger. The agency then requests the Idaho State Police to issue the alert.