



Community Crime Prevention Newsletter

Plymouth, MN

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The AMBER Alert System: Helping to Find Missing Children

Every parent's worst nightmare is losing a child. Close to 800,000 children are reported missing in the United States every year. The majority of these are "voluntary runaways" who are quickly located and safely returned home. Very few missing child reports are true "stranger" abductions. Abductions are commonly committed by someone known to the child. However, every report of a missing child, no matter what the circumstances, is serious and recovering a missing child is of utmost importance to the police department. There are many resources available in investigating a report of a missing child and getting information out to the public is one of the most effective ways to find missing kids.



The AMBER Alert (which stands for "America's Missing: Broadcasting Emergency Response") is a nationwide program created to get the public involved in finding an abducted child in the most serious circumstances. The AMBER Alert was originally named for Amber Hagerman, a 9-year-old child who was abducted and murdered in Arlington, Texas in 1996. The program is used in the United States and many countries

around the world also use the program. In order to be effective and used properly, there are strict criteria for issuing AMBER Alerts:

- Police must confirm that an abduction has taken place.
- The child is at risk of serious injury or death.
- There is sufficient descriptive information about the child's captor or captor's vehicle to issue an alert.
- The child must be 17 years old or younger.

AMBER Stick Getting information fast is essential in finding missing persons. The AMBER stick is a portable flash drive that enables police to download the profile of a missing person within seconds. The AMBER stick was created for children, but it can be used for all members of the family, including adults and pets. The AMBER stick is available from the Plymouth Police Department for \$15. Call 763-509-5198 for more information.

Once police determine that *all* AMBER Alert

criteria are met, law enforcement will issue an AMBER Alert. AMBER Alerts will interrupt regular programming and are broadcast on radio, television and highway signs. AMBER Alerts can also be issued on lottery tickets, wireless devices such as mobile phones, and over the Internet. Use of the AMBER Alert has helped save the lives of 540 children nationwide.

Many people are confused and concerned when they hear of a missing child case where an AMBER Alert has not been issued. It is important to remember that the AMBER Alert is only *one tool* that law enforcement uses to find abducted children. To allow activations in the absence of significant information that an abduction has occurred or in cases where there is no information about the suspect could lead to abuse of the system and ultimately weaken its effectiveness by causing the public to become desensitized to alerts when they are issued. For more information on the AMBER Alert, go to: www.amberalert.gov.

Solicitors and Peddlers

Summer brings warm weather, flowers, and door-to-door salespeople. If you do not want solicitors, place a sign on your door stating, "Peddlers and Solicitors Prohibited" (minimum font 48 point). Signage won't stop all solicitors, but it will stop most. If you do make a purchase you don't want, Minnesota has a "Right to Cancel" law, giving you 3 days to cancel orders over \$25 and receive a refund in most cases. For more information about peddlers and solicitor rules in Plymouth call 763-509-5160 and request our brochure, "Peddler & Solicitor Rules in Plymouth." For information about Minnesota law, go to www.ag.state.mn.us.

**Crime Free Multi-Housing (CFMH)
Corner: Mediation**

When people live in close proximity to one another, there are bound to be conflicts. However, small nuisances (loud walking, kids playing, or the neighbor propping the door open) can turn into major problems if they are not dealt with.

The most effective way to solve issues between people is to sit down and talk! Community Mediation Services (CMS) provides **free** mediation for Plymouth residents. Mediation is a voluntary process where a neutral mediator assists disputants in reaching a mutually satisfactory settlement of their dispute. Mediation is a great option for:

- ✓ Landlord / Tenant Disputes
- ✓ Neighbor / Neighbor Disputes
- ✓ Juvenile Issues
- ✓ Harassment
- ✓ **Any** dispute *except* assault and felony crimes

Anyone can make a referral to CMS. Once a referral is made, CMS will contact the parties and advise them of the proposed mediation. CMS works days, evenings, and weekends and does travel to locations convenient for the disputants. All parties must agree to mediate. Mediation is successful in many cases! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain! For more information, call Community Mediation at 763-561-0033 or go to www.mediationprogram.com.

Working together, we can make a difference!

Especially for Business: Shoplifting

Shoplifting is a common crime that costs consumers and businesses an estimated \$12.1 **billion** each year. Shoplifters come from all age groups and from all income levels.

Characteristics of Shoplifters

1. Carrying something that can be used to hide items or wearing clothing inappropriate for the weather
2. Seem nervous and don't want help
3. Watch the staff carefully
4. Frequent restrooms or fitting rooms
5. Cause disturbances or are overly fussy or demanding

Prevention Techniques

1. Greet all customers. Ask, "Can I help you?"
 2. Monitor fitting rooms and sales area
 3. Keep expensive items locked up
 4. Be aware of suspicious activity
 5. Prosecute all shoplifters and advertise this policy
- Employees must observe the suspect take merchandise and then pass the last point of sale before arresting a shoplifter. If an employee apprehends a shoplifter, contact police for assistance by calling 911.*

Reminder:

There is NO PARKING on any city street between 2 and 5 AM!

Did you know? The Plymouth Police Department offers fingerprint services to those who live or work in Plymouth. Fingerprinting is done weekly on Wednesdays between 4 and 6 p.m. by appointment. Please call 763-509-5160 to schedule an appointment. The charge for this service is \$10 per person.

Fraud Stop: "Grandparent" Scam

How the scam works: You get a call. The caller says, "Grandma/pa, it's me!" You reply, "Is that you, (insert name)", the caller says "yes" and tells you they are in trouble (usually in Canada) and need money right now. The caller says that they don't want mom and dad to know they got into trouble, so they are calling you. The caller will ask for a money order to be sent to them right away. If you wire the money, you will never see it again.

The Stop: Always ask the caller to identify themselves (do not offer a name) and always verify a story (or ask a question only the real person would know) before you send money.

Featured Safety Program: Plymouth Citizens Public Safety Academy—Fall 2011

The Plymouth Police and Fire Departments are again offering a 12-week Citizens Public Safety Academy. The academy gives participants insight into the day-to-day world of Plymouth police officers and firefighters. Sessions will cover diverse topics including fire operations, crime lab, SWAT, dispatch, investigations, and auxiliary services. The academy will feature classroom instruction on laws, methodologies, equipment and technologies; field experience; and personal interaction with department members. Classes are held on Thursdays from 6:30-9:30 PM, beginning September 8th. Class size is limited and participants must be 18 or older and live, work, or go to school in Plymouth. If you are interested in attending the 2011 Citizens Public Safety academy, call 763-509-5135. The application process will include a criminal history check.

Emergency: **9-1-1** Non-emergency: **763-525-6210** CrimeStoppers: **800-222-TIPS**

If you have any comments about this newsletter, please contact Officer Angela Haseman at the Plymouth Police Department, 3400 Plymouth Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55447, 763-509-5147 or at ahaseman@plymouthmn.gov. Thank you!