STATE OF MINNESOTA
MN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
1/15/2016

Report on the Need for a Silver Alert System in the State of Minnesota.

Issue:

To study the state's need for a Silver Alert system to aid in the recovery of missing persons who are senior citizens with dementia, traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's disease, or other mental disabilities.

Recommendation Summary:

1. It is recommended that the State of Minnesota continue to use existing missing person systems to locate missing and endangered persons.

2. It is recommended that modifications be made to enhance existing systems in the State of Minnesota which assist in locating Missing Persons, including those who are senior citizens with dementia, traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's disease, or other mental disabilities.

3. It is recommended that a statewide training plan for missing person's cases be implemented including online training and regional/statewide training for law enforcement.

I. Introduction

Minnesota Session Laws 2015 – Chapter 36, states in part, that the commissioner of public safety shall convene a Silver Alert system working group to study the state's need for a Silver Alert system to aid in the recovery of missing persons who are senior citizens with dementia, traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's disease, or other mental disabilities. If the working group concludes that the state needs a Silver Alert system, the group shall make recommendations on the establishment of a Silver Alert system including, but not limited to, criteria for activating the system. When studying this issue, the working group shall assess the state's current notification systems used to locate missing persons, including the state's Amber Alert system, and examine alert systems from other states to determine the most successful methods for locating missing vulnerable senior citizens.

The members of the group who prepared and endorse this report are:

- *Chief Rodney Seurer, Savage Police Department, Chair*
- *Jim Franklin, MN Sheriff's Association Executive Director*
- *David King, Executive Director Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance*
- *Sheriff Lon Thiele, Steele County Sheriff's Office*
- *Steve Misgen, Minnesota Department of Transportation*
- *Alzheimer's Association*
- *Tubman*
- *Reverend Dr. Janet Johnson, Cultural & Ethnic Communities Leadership Council*
- *Jim duBois, Executive Director, Minnesota Broadcasters Association*
- *Drew Evans, Superintendent MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension*
- *Wade Setter, Former Superintendent MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension*
- *Scott Mueller, Special Agent in Charge, MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension*
- *Janell Rasmussen, MN AMBER Alert Coordinator, MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension*
- *Janell Twardowski, MN Crime Alert Network, MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension*
- *Kris Rush, MN Missing Persons Clearinghouse, MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension*

II. Background

The Silver Alert Working Group met on July 15, 2015. The group worked with the overarching goal of providing tools to law enforcement to locate missing endangered persons in order to return them safely home.

The MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) provided an overview of the existing systems that are in place. The group discussed the possibility of gaps in the current systems. The group also discussed the implications of having a silver alert system that would limit the criteria to a specific group and not leaving the discretion up to law enforcement to decide based on Brandon's Law criteria. That criteria includes:

- Accept without delay any report of a missing person
- Determine if person is missing and endangered (sufficient evidence that the missing person is at risk of physical injury or death)
    - Missing as a result of a confirmed abduction or under circumstances that indicate that the disappearance was not voluntary
    - Missing under known dangerous circumstances
    - Missing more than 30 days
    - Under the age of 21
    - Evidence the individual is in need of medical attention or prescription medication that would have a serious adverse effect on the person's health if they do not receive the needed care or medication
    - No pattern of running away or disappearing
    - The person is mentally impaired

- o Evidence that the person may have been abducted by a noncustodial parent
- o The individual has been the subject of past threats or acts of violence
- o There is evidence the person may be lost in the wilderness, backcountry or outdoors where survival is precarious
- o Any other factor that a law enforcement agency deems to indicate that the person may be at risk of physical injury or death
- Immediately enter identifying and descriptive information into the National Crime Information System (NCIC), including vehicle information, known aliases, and dates of birth
- Immediately consult with the BCA
- Promptly notify all appropriate law enforcement agencies
- Collect and gather identifying information

Currently, alerts are issued in Minnesota for someone who may fit the Silver Alert criteria in another state, however it is called a missing endangered person alert and is not limited to those that are above a certain determined age (i.e. a missing 40 year old who may have a traumatic brain injury; a college student; a vulnerable adult who has not shown up where they are supposed to be). There was discussion on improvement, existing gaps where modifications could be made and discussed opportunities for training and education to further train law enforcement on response, Alzheimer's, autism, and other critical areas of training when responding to a missing persons case.

The BCA provided research to the group on what other states are doing, including statistics and lessons learned by states that have implemented the Silver Alert, or similar, plans. The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA), currently lists Minnesota as one of 41 states who have a program in place to broadcast alerts when vulnerable adults go missing. It mentions that many are known as Silver Alerts, other are called Endangered Missing Person Advisory, but all feature a structured set of criteria and procedures for law enforcement to institute an alert. It identifies that many of the criteria and procedures are different in each state, but the one common thread is the premise behind these alerts: to locate someone whose disappearance poses a threat to the person's health and safety, including serious bodily harm or death. In 2014, Minnesota had 88,000 people 65 and older with Alzheimer's. That number is expected to increase 36% by the year 2025.

EXISTING SYSTEMS/PROGRAMS IN PLACE

Minnesota Crime Alert Network

The Minnesota Crime Alert Network is available to all local law enforcement agencies to distribute alert when they have a missing person who they feel is in danger (Endangered Missing Persons Alert). This Minnesota Crime Alert Network was created in 1995 after the abduction of a child in Eden Prairie Minnesota. The legislature wanted to establish a system where the BCA would train local law enforcement and provide them with a resource to quickly alert the public when a child was missing and to ask for the public's help in locating the child. Today, the crime

alert network is used for a variety of crimes where the public, media or other law enforcement is alerted.

AMBER Alert Plan

Minnesota has an established AMBER Alert Plan with criteria and procedures that include; an abducted child 17 years of age or younger where there is sufficient information to disseminate to the public to assist in locating that child. Local law enforcement agencies have received AMBER Alert Training. The procedures require that they contact the BCA to request an AMBER Alert activation. The BCA then works with the local law enforcement agency to issue the alert.

Minnesota Missing Persons Clearinghouse

Brandon's Law requires that local law enforcement agencies that have an endangered missing person, contact the BCA. The clearinghouse can provide assistance, resources and will work with the local agency to make sure that the missing person is properly entered into NCIC.

III. Recommendation Details

The Silver Alert Working Group sought to assess current systems in the State of Minnesota, anticipate future cases, as well as training and resources needed to adequately deal with those cases, and make recommendations regarding key factors and criteria for legislators to consider if changes are made and state funding is appropriated.

1. **It is recommended that the State of Minnesota continue to use existing missing person's systems to locate missing and endangered persons.**

   It was determined by the group that Minnesota's current missing person statute (299C.52) covers endangered adults who are determined to be:

   - In need of medical attention or prescription medication
   - Mentally impaired
   - Lost in the wilderness, backcountry, or outdoors where survival is precarious
   - Any other factor that indicates the person may be at risk of physical injury or death

   When a missing adult is determined to be endangered, MSS 299C.53 subd. 1, requires that the agency immediately consult with the BCA, enter the missing individual into the NCIC, and promptly notify all appropriate law enforcement agencies. In addition, the Minnesota Crime Alert network provides the ability to send missing person alerts to the media and public, including categories for gas stations, convenience stores, hospitals, fire services, gaming facilities/casinos, hotels/motels and a number of other business and public categories.

When an agency contacts the BCA Missing Person Clearinghouse regarding an endangered missing person, an assessment is done of the situation to determine the best course of action for locating the missing individual quickly, including sending an endangered missing person alert, the use of traditional media and social media, investigative assistance, as well as other resources.

Minnesota Statute currently includes missing senior citizens with dementia, traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's disease, or other cognitive disabilities. This also includes the ability to send endangered missing person alerts. Numerous alerts are issued each year for missing individuals with dementia or Alzheimer's, as well as other cognitive impairments or mental illnesses.

Missing Persons Alerts Issued through the Minnesota Crime Alert Network:

ALERT TYPE	2013	2014
60 Years of Age or Older	6	11
18 Years of Age or Older	19	27
Suicidal	13	11
AMBER Alert	1	0
Abduction/Kidnapping	4	2

Concerns about creating a Silver Alert:

Utilizing an endangered missing person alert is a way to encompass all missing individuals at risk of physical injury or death and is recognizable by the public as something they can help with. The general public may not readily identify and know what a Silver Alert is or how to respond. Creating a specific alert that covers only seniors may inhibit law enforcement and the community's ability to respond to endangered missing persons as well as create a confusing array of "color" alerts that may or may not be recognizable. Everyone knows what a missing person alert is, most people do not know what a Silver Alert is.

2. **It is recommended that modifications be made to enhance existing systems in the State of Minnesota which assist in locating missing persons, including those who are senior citizens with dementia, traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's disease, or other mental disabilities.**

Enhancements include:

- Strengthening the Crime Alert Network for distributing missing person alerts by eliminating existing fees for receiving alerts.
- Create new alert categories and work with community partners to get information into the hands of the people most likely to help in locating a missing person during the course of their daily duties (i.e. delivery services/postal; ambulance/emergency services; others).

- Develop a marketing plan and work with local agencies to promote the missing endangered person program.
- Develop and deliver training on recognizing and responding accordingly to missing persons with Alzheimer's and dementia.
- Develop and deliver training on appropriate utilization of missing person alerts.
- Enhance existing use of social media and develop ways to build on current social media trends.

Support for enhancements:

Eliminate fees that deter businesses and individuals from signing up for alerts with a goal of doubling membership and adding additional categories.

Cost estimate $50,000

Create a Crime Alert Network position to develop marketing, recruit membership, and work with business and law enforcement partners to create a more robust missing person notification system.

Cost estimate $85,000

Create a Missing Person Clearinghouse position to provide comprehensive support to law enforcement for Minnesota missing persons including additional follow-up, better tracking of Minnesota missing persons, alerts, successes, outcomes, and areas for improvement.

Cost estimate $85,000

3. **It is recommended that a statewide training plan for missing person cases be implemented including online training and regional/statewide training for law enforcement.**

We have an opportunity to train and educate law enforcement on how to recognize and respond accordingly to missing vulnerable adults.

Online Training
To put together an online training program for all 10,000+ law enforcement officers in the State of Minnesota. This training will focus on educating law enforcement on how to respond to a missing person report in their jurisdiction and what resources are available to them.
Cost estimated to be approximately $100,000

Regional/Statewide Training
To provide regional/statewide training where law enforcement would learn how to respond to missing person cases, including those with dementia, traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's disease, or other mental disabilities. Training would include model Responding to Missing Persons with Alzheimer's training provided by the IACP, the Minnesota Model Policy, statutory requirements and resources that are available to local agencies when they have a

missing persons case. This would also include training local agencies on creating a policy and providing checklists to officers responding.

Cost estimated to be approximately $100,000