



NATIONAL BLUE ALERT NETWORK

EFFECTIVE **BLUE ALERT** PLANS

GUIDANCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS



COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

Recommended citation:

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. 2017. *Effective Blue Alert Plans: Guidance and Recommendations*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

All photos courtesy of the COPS Office unless otherwise noted.

Published 2017

Contents

Letter from the Director	iii
Introduction	1
1. Blue Alert Activation	6
2. Requesting an Alert	8
3. Writing Effective Alerts	10
4. Geographical Scope	12
5. Interstate and Intrastate Coordination	11
6. Duration of Blue Alert	16
7. Officer Privacy	17
8. Apprehension Efforts	18
Conclusion	20
About the COPS Office	21

Letter from the Director

Dear Law Enforcement Leaders and Protectors of Law Enforcement Professionals:

In a free society and a nation of laws, we place a great deal of responsibility and special trust on law enforcement at all levels of government, including state, local, tribal and federal. Today, the burden on law enforcement continues to grow as society shifts in beliefs, values and new legislation is created requiring law enforcement to respond to the ever changing social landscape, within the framework of the laws and our great Constitution.

Our peace keepers are routinely thrown into the position of being society's referees; often requiring extraordinary acts of bravery to safeguard our citizenry. Unfortunately, within our free society are a very small number of criminal offenders who attack and cause harm to our law enforcement professionals. This harm includes murdering of law enforcement officers, serious bodily harm and the threat of greater harm to law enforcement and citizens alike. On December 20, 2014 such an outrageous attack took place resulting in the murder of two New York City police officers. In their honor and other fallen law enforcement officers, the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu Blue Alert Act was enacted by the United States Congress.

The Act requires the creation of the National Blue Alert Network. The COPS Office is vested with the responsibility of the implementing and sustaining the Act and its provisions. Designed to enhance the ability of law enforcement to track down individuals who have attacked law enforcement officers, the National Blue Alert Network promotes electronic and digital notifications with actionable information to law enforcement, the media, and the public when a law enforcement officer is killed, seriously injured, missing in the line of duty, or when a credible threat to their safety has been detected.

Like AMBER Alerts, which are designed to speed actionable information about missing children to the public, Blue Alerts provide details about possible assailants, including physical descriptions, vehicle information, and other identifying characteristics—information that law enforcement uses to keep the public safe, and that can be used to support their safety as well.

This proven strategy and approach will provide a very efficient means of communication of critical information that can galvanize states, regions, even the nation as a whole, to assist in the prevention of attacks against law enforcement as well as in the capture of those responsible for such egregious acts of violence against our peacekeepers. The goal of the National Blue Alert Network is to create a network providing nationwide coverage and to standardize and integrate state Blue Alert plans so that all of the systems operate as one.

To achieve the intent and goals of the Congressional Act, the COPS Office has prepared this publication, which offers practical guidance for adopting and using Blue Alert Plans. Included are recommendations from states and other governmental entities leading the way for the implementation of the National Blue Alert Network.

The COPS Office is honored to implement the National Blue Alert Network. In keeping with the strategic interest of the COPS Office, we rely on input, guidance and recommendations from law enforcement practitioners, public safety experts, communications professionals, and other stakeholders. Making safety for law enforcement in our great nation, is a priority with the COPS Office, however a team effort is needed to create and expand the safeguards provided by the National Blue Alert Network. We call on law enforcement professionals, elected officials and the citizens of our nation to promote the adoption of the Blue Alert plans in every state, tribe, territory and the District of Columbia. Together we can expand Blue Alert protections from coast to coast while promoting safety for our law enforcement professionals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Keith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Phil Keith
Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Introduction

On May 19, 2015, the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015, 42 U.S.C. § 14165 et seq. (the Blue Alert Act), became law. Named for two fatally ambushed New York Police Department (NYPD) officers, the Blue Alert Act establishes a voluntary nationwide system to give an early warning of threats against law enforcement officers.

By facilitating rapid dissemination of information to law enforcement agencies, the media, and the public, the Blue Alert Act is intended to aid in apprehending violent criminals wanted for killing or seriously injuring a law enforcement officer in the line of duty; in finding officers who are missing in connection with their official duties; or in sharing notice of imminent and credible threats that an individual intends to cause the serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is committed to implementing the Blue Alert Act as part of its drive to advance officer safety and wellness. Because of its extensive previous work and collaborative research on officer safety and wellness, the DOJ's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) was assigned to oversee implementation of the Blue Alert Act through the creation of a National Blue Alert Network.

The National Blue Alert Network provides resources and technical assistance to states, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders seeking to establish or enhance an existing Blue Alert plan. The network also maintains a secure data repository, for law enforcement only,



Scene of Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu ambush

containing many Blue Alert resources collected from around the nation, including examples of legislation, policies, forms, and a directory of state Blue Alert officials.

Blue Alert plans should be considered one tool in a larger, comprehensive approach to information sharing and suspect apprehension. This publication, *Effective Blue Alert Plans: Guidance and Recommendations*, is designed to guide state and local law enforcement agencies through the development of a Blue Alert plan by identifying elements and issues to be considered when drafting a plan.

This resource can also be used to enhance and standardize existing Blue Alert policies and plans. Although entirely voluntary, the guidance and recommendations contained herein are highly encouraged in order to promote compatible and integrated Blue Alert plans throughout the United States. In addition to providing this and other published resources, the National Blue Alert Network provides direct technical assistance and no-cost consultation to states and local law enforcement agencies seeking to establish or enhance a Blue Alert plan.

Definitions

- 1. Blue Alert Network** – The national communications network established by the Attorney General of the United States pursuant to the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu Blue Alert Act of 2015.
- 2. Blue Alert Plan** – The plan of a state, unit of local government, or federal agency participating in the Blue Alert Network for the dissemination of information received as a Blue Alert.
- 3. Blue Alert Issuing Authority** – An entity (typically a state agency) responsible for issuing Blue Alerts on behalf of law enforcement agencies within the entity's jurisdiction.
- 4. Blue Alert Requesting Agency** – A law enforcement agency seeking the issuance of a Blue Alert.
- 5. Law Enforcement Officer** – An individual involved in crime and juvenile delinquency control or reduction, or enforcement of the criminal laws (including juvenile delinquency), including but not limited to police, corrections, probation, parole, and judicial officers.
- 6. State** – Each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

7. Covered Event – An incident involving one of the following for which a Blue Alert can be issued:

- a. The serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer in the line of duty.
- b. A law enforcement officer who is missing in connection with the officer’s official duties.
- c. An imminent and credible threat that an individual intends to cause the serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer.

Blue Alert technology

GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for maintaining and operating the nation’s emergency alert infrastructure. In order to ensure that alerting capabilities keep up with current and emerging technologies, FEMA partners with various stakeholders from both the public and private sectors representing broadcasting, mobile device manufacture, and many other interested industries.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) also plays a key role in this infrastructure, as it establishes technical requirements and other rules for broadcasters, cable system operators, mobile commercial service providers, and other participants in the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and voluntary mobile alerting programs.

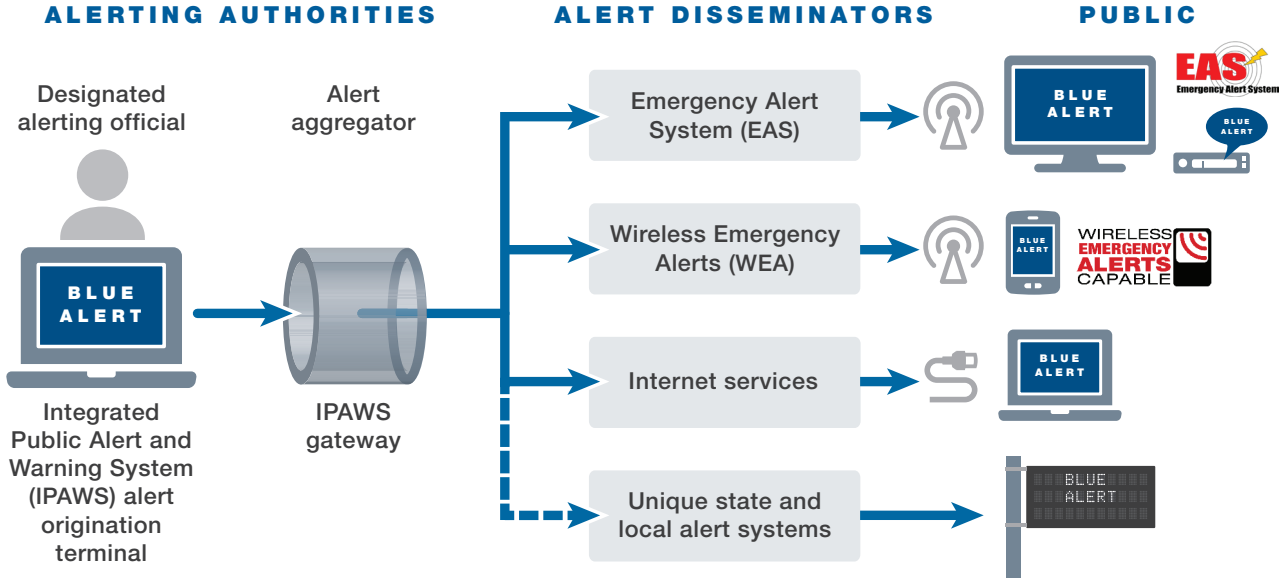
Blue Alert plans can use the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to alert the public and aid in the identification and apprehension of a wanted suspect or the recovery of a missing officer. To use these systems effectively, states and many jurisdictions rely on the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS).

IPAWS is operated by FEMA and provides for the integration of Blue Alerts into the national alert and warning infrastructure. It allows alerting authorities to write their own emergency alerts using commercially available, FEMA-approved software applications that comply with common alerting protocols. These alerts are authenticated and delivered simultaneously through multiple communication pathways to reach the public as quickly as possible. Figure 1 on page 4 depicts the architecture of this integrated alert system.



FEMA’s IPAWS national emergency alert gateway equipment

Figure 1. Elements of IPAWS system architecture



Source: COPS Office

Blue Alert plan elements

Any assault of a law enforcement officer that leads to death or serious injury constitutes a public safety emergency and requires the swiftest possible response to apprehend all suspects and locate any missing officers. The same is true when an officer is missing in connection with official duties and there is reason to suspect foul play. Blue Alert plans provide a ready response that can be activated at a moment's notice. Dozens of states and many local law enforcement agencies have already developed plans and are prepared in the event that tragedy strikes.

Blue Alert plans typically vary from one jurisdiction to another, depending on local statutes, ordinances, and policy preferences. While such local nuances are inevitable, differing alert criteria and protocols among jurisdictions can cause dangerous delays. It is crucial that Blue Alert plans incorporate certain core elements in order to achieve a uniform, interoperable network of plans across the country. The National Blue Alert Network has identified the following elements as crucial to a coordinated national framework:

BLUE ALERT PLAN ELEMENTS

- 1. Activation Criteria** – Explicit activation criteria to guide alert decision making
- 2. Requesting an Alert** – Mechanisms and protocols for requesting an alert
- 3. Writing Alerts** – Guidance on writing effective EAS- and WEA-compliant alerts
- 4. Geographical Scope** – Guidance on geographical targeting for effectiveness
- 5. Interstate Coordination** – Protocols to facilitate interstate coordination
- 6. Apprehension Efforts** – Guidance to aid in the apprehension of suspects
- 7. Duration of Alerts** – Guidance on the duration and cancellation of alerts
- 8. Officer Privacy** – Practices and policies to protect the privacy of involved officers

1. Blue Alert Activation

Activation criteria and protocols should be established describing the specific circumstances that can give rise to the issuance of a Blue Alert and subsequent actions.

Decision to activate Blue Alert

In most states, Blue Alerts require careful coordination between the appropriate alerting authority and the law enforcement agency investigating a covered event. Each plays a supportive, yet distinct, role in the Blue Alert decision-making process. The decision to request a Blue Alert should rest with the law enforcement agency investigating a covered event. There may be situations where a law enforcement agency chooses not to request an alert in order to further a particular investigative objective or strategy.

In some cases, investigators may already possess reliable information about the identity and location of a suspect but may not want that information to be made public before they can attempt apprehension efforts. In other cases, investigators may not believe that the known suspect information and identifiers are sufficient to enlist the public's assistance. Beyond these examples, there are any number of other fact-based reasons why an investigating agency may choose not to ask for Blue Alert issuance.

If an investigating agency determines that public notification through Blue Alert is not warranted or not prudent at the time, it should still consider using all available peer-to-peer communication resources to provide other law enforcement agencies and personnel with early warning of credible threats. Such resources include the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (Nlets), the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and any other statewide or local systems capable of carrying such messages.

Activation criteria



The logo of the National Blue Alert Network

Although the decision to request a Blue Alert is up to the investigating agency, the decision to actually issue a Blue Alert is ultimately made by the Blue

Alert issuing authority after evaluating the request and confirming that it meets activation criteria.

Activation criteria should be explicit and should be codified in statute, policy, or both. Criteria should also be defined in a way that makes it easy for a reviewer to apply available facts about a covered event and quickly determine whether it qualifies for issuance of a Blue Alert. The National Blue Alert Network has identified the following activation criteria as crucial to a coordinated national framework:

RECOMMENDATION: The Blue Alert issuing authority should issue an alert when a request has been made by a law enforcement agency having primary jurisdiction over the incident in question, and one of the following three sets of threshold criteria has been met:

1. Death or serious injury of a law enforcement officer in the line of duty.
 - a. The agency confirms that a law enforcement officer has been
 - i. killed,
 - ii. seriously injured,
 - iii. attacked and with indications of death or serious injury.
 - b. Any suspect involved has not been apprehended.
 - c. There is sufficient descriptive information about the suspect, including any relevant vehicle and license tag information.
2. Threat to cause death or serious injury to a law enforcement officer.
 - a. The requesting agency confirms that the threat is imminent and credible.
 - b. At the time of receipt of the threat, any suspect involved is wanted by a law enforcement agency.
 - c. Any suspect involved has not been apprehended.
 - d. There is sufficient descriptive information about the suspect, including any relevant vehicle and license tag information.
3. Law enforcement officer missing in connection with official duties.
 - a. The agency concludes that the law enforcement officer is missing in connection with the officer's official duties.
 - b. There is an indication of serious injury to or death of the law enforcement officer.
 - c. Any suspect involved has not been apprehended.
 - d. There is sufficient descriptive information about the suspect, including any relevant vehicle and license tag information.

2. Requesting an Alert

Common protocols and mechanisms should be established to facilitate requests for a Blue Alert activation.

A Blue Alert issuing authority (typically a state agency) should develop protocols and mechanisms to facilitate an alert request from law enforcement agencies. The goal should be to make the process of requesting a Blue Alert simple to understand and as efficient as possible. Specific procedures and tools for achieving this will vary among states and localities based on their existing interagency communication infrastructure and policies. Many states with Blue Alert plans have modeled the alert request process on the longstanding AMBER Alert protocols. This is particularly advantageous for states where the alerting authority is the same agency or office for AMBER Alerts.

At present, most states employ activation protocols that require law enforcement agencies to either call in an alert request or fax a standard request form to a designated twenty-four hour office. Several states have implemented web-based protocols for Blue Alert requests. Web-based systems can save time by allowing for immediate data entry and electronic submission; however, they should have backup procedures in case of internet outages.

RECOMMENDATION: The Blue Alert issuing authority should provide law enforcement agencies with a central point of contact for requesting an alert. The point of contact should be accessible

OD-011 (01/2016)
MICHIGAN STATE POLICE

BLUE ALERT REQUEST FORM
AUTHORITY: MCL 28.697. COMPLIANCE: Voluntary.
Email the completed form and call to confirm the receipt of the email.

I. General Information					
Is this the initial request or an update? <input type="checkbox"/> Initial <input type="checkbox"/> Update		Date of Request			
II. Investigating Law Enforcement Agency Information					
Name of Agency		Contact Number		FAX Number	
Name/Title of Investigating Officer		Phone Number of Investigating Officer		Phone Number for Media Inquiries	
III. Suspect Information					
Name of Suspect		Race	Sex (M/F)	Date of Birth	
Height	Weight	Eye Color	Hair Color		
The investigating law enforcement agency has determined that the suspect poses a serious risk or threat to the public and other law enforcement personnel. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					Does the suspect have a weapon? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
Clothing Description					
Unique Physical Characteristics					
IV. Suspect Vehicle Information					
Vehicle Make	Model	Year	Color	Registration Plate	State
Additional Descriptors					
V. Incident Description/Additional Information					
Incident Description/Additional Information					
Name of Injured/Fallen Officer					

Important: In accordance with MCL 28.697, a Blue Alert will only be activated if one of the following is provided for broadcast to the public:

- Suspect's name
- Detailed physical description of the suspect
- Detailed description of the suspect's vehicle
- Full or partial vehicle registration plate numbers or letters

If a Blue Alert is activated, your request is only valid for a 48-hour period. Requests for an extension must be made by contacting the Michigan State Police

Credit: Michigan State Police

Sample Blue Alert request form

around the clock without exception. In many cases, this point of contact will be a statewide emergency communications component (state police, emergency management, etc.).

A standardized activation request form should be made available to law enforcement agencies in paper or electronic format. If using a paper form, the form should include clear instructions for faxing or submitting the completed form to the issuing authority point of contact. Regardless of which format is used, form elements should include the following:

- 1.** Requesting agency and officials:
 - a.** Name of requesting agency
 - b.** Name, title, and contact information of requesting official
 - c.** Name, title, and contact information of investigating official
 - d.** Name, title, and contact information of chief executive or designee
- 2.** Signature of chief executive or designee confirming that that agency has primary investigative authority for the incident in question
- 3.** Activation criteria confirmation, formatted as a checklist corresponding to the activation criteria described in element one
- 4.** Incident description (brief and suitable for public release)
- 5.** Officer identification (NOT for public release unless officer is missing):
 - a.** Name, agency, rank, title
 - b.** Nature of injuries
 - c.** (If missing) Personal identifiers, including race, sex, age, height, weight, hair, eyes, clothing, etc.
 - d.** (If missing) Last known location
- 6.** Suspect information:
 - a.** Name, if known
 - b.** Personal identifiers, including race, sex, age, height, weight, hair, eyes, clothing, etc.
 - c.** Vehicle information if known:
 - i.** Make, model, year, color, license state and number (or partial number)
 - ii.** Outstanding characteristics
 - d.** Suspect location:
 - i.** Last known location
 - ii.** Direction of travel
 - iii.** Possible destinations
 - e.** Weapons, known or suspected

3. Writing Effective Alerts

Blue Alerts should be written as concise messages aimed at getting the public's attention and prompting specific actions to aid in the desired outcome.

How a message is written can be just as important as its contents. Blue Alerts should be written to convey a concise message that is immediately understood, using the fewest words possible without compromising clarity. Individuals who have been designated as alerting authorities receive specialized training from IPAWS on how to write effective alerts that comply with common alerting protocols.

The most effective Blue Alert messages are those that result in the public taking the recommended action to protect themselves while aiding law enforcement. In the search for a dangerous suspect, a Blue Alert should advise the public never to approach a suspect and call 911 or another number if the suspect is seen or if they have information that could be helpful to the search. According to IPAWS training guidelines, the following items should be considered when writing alerts.

WRITING EFFECTIVE ALERT AND WARNING MESSAGES

- **Specificity.** If the message is not specific enough about the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of the threat, the public will spend more time seeking specific information to confirm the risk. If necessary, be specific about what is or is not known.
- **Consistency.** An alert or warning should be internally consistent; that is, one part of the message should not contradict another part. It should also be consistent with messages that are distributed via other channels. To the extent possible, alerts and warnings

for similar hazards should use consistent language and format from event to event, changing only the necessary details.

- **Certainty.** Avoid conveying a sense of uncertainty, either in content or in tone. Confine the message to what is known—or, if necessary, describe what is unknown in certain terms. Do not guess or speculate.
- **Clarity.** Use common words that can easily be understood. Do not use technical terminology or jargon.
- **Accuracy.** Do not overstate or understate the facts. Do not omit important information. Convey respect for the intelligence and judgment of the public.

4. Geographical Scope

The geographical scope of a Blue Alert should target areas most likely to facilitate apprehension and should not be limited by state lines.

Careful consideration should be given when choosing the area or geographical boundaries for alert distribution. In some cases, there may be reliable information that suggests the general location of a suspect (specific neighborhood, city, county, etc.), but in other cases, there may



When choosing the area or geographical boundaries for Blue Alert distribution, make sure to target areas most likely to facilitate apprehension.

be no indication as to a location or direction of travel. Geographic scope of an alert should ultimately be based on the best information available at the time of alert issuance.

Alerting software allows for alerts to be targeted to an entire state or any subdivision thereof, depending on the delivery capabilities of the system used for public dissemination. For example, Blue Alerts relayed through the EAS to local television stations will be broadcast throughout the entire viewing area of the station—but the station's viewing area may be too broad or too narrow, depending on the situation. Alerting authorities should

be cognizant of any bleed-over into areas not necessarily targeted by the alert, as well as any other limitations of their alerting software and outlets.

RECOMMENDATION: Blue Alerts should be focused on the geographic areas most likely to facilitate the apprehension of the suspect. Alerts should not be targeted beyond a reasonable distance from where the suspect is thought to be or could reasonably have traveled. Disseminating an alert too broadly could cause unnecessary alarm and dilute the alert's intended effect. This is a difficult balance that should be informed by the best information available at the time of alert issuance.

The geographic scope of an alert should not be limited by state lines if there is information to suggest interstate travel. If the originating jurisdiction is close to a state line, it should contact the neighboring state or states to discuss the possibility and prudence of a concurrent Blue Alert. Blue Alert plans should include provisions for communication and information sharing with neighboring states, as discussed in section 5.

5. Interstate and Intrastate Coordination

Blue Alert plans should anticipate the need for interstate coordination, especially with neighboring states and adjacent jurisdictions.

The ease and speed of travel throughout the United States makes it possible for wanted persons to quickly flee one location for another. The possibility that a suspect would flee across state lines should always be accounted for in Blue Alert plans.

Interstate coordination is best achieved through prior planning and proactive arrangements between alerting authorities. Alerting officials are encouraged to maintain active professional relationships with their counterparts in nearby jurisdictions.

One of the primary goals of the National Blue Alert Network is to promote interoperability and coordination among all Blue Alert plans nationwide. In order to facilitate communication between Blue Alert plans, the network maintains a list of alerting officials from around the

nation and makes that information available to law enforcement agencies, alerting officials, and other potential Blue Alert stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION: When the subject of an active Blue Alert is thought to be traveling to another jurisdiction beyond the alert's geographical scope but within the same state,



Photo: HILL/Dave5/Stock

Alerting authorities and local law enforcement agencies may both be responsible for reaching out to neighboring jurisdictions.

the alerting authority should consult with the law enforcement agency responsible for the criminal investigation to determine if additional alerts in other areas are called for.

If, however, the suspect is thought to be traveling to another state, beyond the reach of the original alerting authority, the law enforcement agency responsible for the investigation should immediately contact the law enforcement authorities in the suspected destination state or jurisdiction to coordinate efforts. In addition, the original Blue Alert issuing authority should establish communication with the alerting authority of any other affected state or jurisdiction to determine whether alerting coordination is needed.

The National Blue Alert Network is available as a resource to assist with contact information and other information sharing among Blue Alert plans throughout the nation.

6. Duration of Blue Alert

Blue Alerts should remain active for a limited period of time, determined by the situation, and should be cancelled promptly when a suspect is apprehended.

The purpose of a Blue Alert is to rapidly disseminate information to all those who may be in a position to assist with the apprehension of a wanted suspect or to locate a missing officer. In most states with Blue Alert plans, an alert remains active for 24–48 hours. If the suspect has not been apprehended within the active time frame, an alert is typically suspended or cancelled. This does not affect the work of investigators, who will continue to search for a suspect.

RECOMMENDATION: Blue Alerts should remain active for a period of at least 24 hours, but not longer than is reasonably necessary; the exact time should be determined on a case-by-case basis. A Blue Alert should be cancelled as soon as the situation has been resolved—the suspect has been captured or no longer poses a threat or a missing officer has been located.

7. Officer Privacy

Blue Alert plans should include provisions to protect the privacy, dignity, and autonomy of any law enforcement officer who is the subject of a Blue Alert.

Special attention should be taken to protect the privacy and dignity of any law enforcement officer who may be the subject of a Blue Alert. The same consideration should be given to the family of the officer in question.

RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that Blue Alerts comply with all applicable federal, state, and local privacy laws and regulations, issuing entities should consult with their legal advisors responsible for privacy enforcement and protection (state attorney general, city attorney, etc.). Issuing entities should follow legal guidance to include the appropriate standards in their Blue Alert plans to protect the privacy and civil liberties of affected officers and their families.

Blue Alert issuing authorities should not release any information about the identity of an officer who is the subject of a Blue Alert unless the alert was issued because that officer is missing in connection with official duties. In those cases, the Blue Alert issuing authority should defer to the investigating agency about the nature and limits of the officer information to be made public.

8. Apprehension Efforts

Blue Alert plans should include protocols describing and regulating activities designed to aid in the apprehension of a wanted subject.

The primary responsibility for apprehending any suspect wanted in connection with a Blue Alert lies with the law enforcement agency responsible for the underlying criminal investigation. Even so, alerting authorities should play an active role, to the extent possible, by providing subject matter expertise, the use of public safety communications, and any other technical resources. Blue Alert plans should describe the various protocols and resources that could be employed by the issuing authority to support apprehension efforts.

RECOMMENDATION: The Blue Alert issuing authority should work closely with the lead investigating agency to ensure that alert resources are made available in support of suspect apprehension, including

- the use of public safety communications;
- command center operations;
- incident review, evaluation, debriefing, and public information procedures.

A Blue Alert issuing authority should confirm with the investigating agency that the suspect information has been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database operated by the FBI.



Photo: YashchukOlena/iStock

Blue Alert plans should include an inventory of resources that can aid local agencies' apprehension efforts.

Conclusion

Summary

Violent attacks on law enforcement officers constitute an assault on the American way of life and require the swiftest of responses by federal, state, and local governments. Blue Alert plans can provide an important framework for quick response. Our nation's emergency alerting infrastructure is a valuable resource that can expedite information sharing and facilitate the quick apprehension of dangerous criminals who pose an immediate threat to law enforcement.

Since most emergency alerting is conducted on a state-by-state basis, the effectiveness of Blue Alerts can be diminished when a wanted suspect flees beyond the reach of an active Blue Alert. Also, manual coordination with adjoining states or other jurisdiction can become complicated since Blue Alert plans and protocols tend to vary from place to place. These are the two primary problems that the National Blue Alert Network is designed to mitigate.

The National Blue Alert Network establishes a framework with voluntary guidelines and recommendations which can be used by all states and local jurisdictions to promote Blue Alert plan consistency and interoperability. It also provides resources and technical assistance to states, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders seeking to establish or enhance an existing Blue Alert plan. The network also maintains a secure data repository, for law enforcement only, containing many Blue Alert resources collected from around the nation, including examples of legislation, policies, forms, and a directory of state Blue Alert officials.

For more information, visit the COPS Office website at www.cops.usdoj.gov/bluealert, email the COPS Office at BlueAlert@usdoj.gov, or call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Other resources



Federal Emergency Management Agency
Integrated Public Alerting and Warning
System (IPAWS)

<https://www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system>



Federal Communications Commission
Emergency Alert System (EAS)

<https://www.fcc.gov/general/emergency-alert-system-eas>



Federal Communications Commission
Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/wireless-emergency-alerts-wea>

About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community police and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies.

COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement. The Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance (CRI-TA), a program that promotes organizational transformation through analysis of policies, practices, and training related to issues of concern, is also available to law enforcement agencies

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to provide training and technical assistance, enhance crime fighting technology, and add more than 125,000 officers to our nation's streets. We also offer a wide variety of information resources to help law enforcement and community leaders address specific crime issues at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

In honor of two New York City police officers killed in an ambush attack on December 20, 2014, Congress enacted the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu Blue Alert Act in 2015. Created to aid in the apprehension of individuals who have committed acts of violence targeted at police officers, it calls for the development of a nationwide network for rapid dissemination of actionable information in cases where an officer is killed, seriously injured, or missing in the line of duty or when there is a credible and imminent threat against law enforcement. Twenty-seven states now have Blue Alert plans. Expanding Blue Alert plans to cover all states and U.S. territories can enhance the network's effectiveness. This report offers guidance to help state and local law enforcement develop a Blue Alert Plan aligned with and integrated into a national system. Presented by the COPS Office, which oversees the National Blue Alert Network, it provides practical recommendations gathered from law enforcement practitioners, communications professionals, and other experts.



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
145 N Street NE
Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details on COPS Office programs, call
the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.