

MISSING AND ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY ENACTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

I. PURPOSE

The Missing and Endangered Person Advisory (MEPA) is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement and local broadcasters to rapidly disseminate information about a missing and endangered person to law enforcement agencies, broadcasters and the public. The goal of this program is to assist law enforcement agencies when a missing or endangered person does not qualify for an AMBER Alert activation.

Any Montana law enforcement agency has the authority to request a Missing and Endangered Person Advisory (MEPA) through the Montana Department of Justice when the case meets the criteria listed in this policy. All requests for a MEPA must be made through the Montana DOJ Helpdesk. This policy does not prohibit Montana law enforcement agencies from using local resources independently from DOJ.

II. CRITERIA

The Missing and Endangered Person Advisory is initiated solely by Montana law enforcement agencies using the following criteria:

1. Do the circumstances fail to meet the criteria for an [AMBER Alert](#)? (If they do meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert, immediately follow the protocol to issue an AMBER Alert.)
2. Is the person missing under unexplained, involuntary or suspicious circumstances?
3. Is the person believed to be in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, environment or weather conditions, in the company of a potentially dangerous person or some other factor that may put the person in peril?
4. Is there information that could assist the public in the safe recovery of the missing person?

III. PROCEDURE FOR AGENCIES TO INITIATE AN ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY

- If the missing or endangered person situation meets the criteria outlined above, you can contact the Montana Department of Justice Help Desk at 406-444-2800 and request assistance with a MEPA. Every law enforcement agency that has the equipment can create a MEPA poster using the missing person locator system. The Help Desk can create posters for those agencies who request assistance. **A MEPA will be issued according to the enactment procedures created by the Montana Department of Justice.**

- For a person to be listed on a MEPA, the requesting agency must enter the person into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) using the proper message key: Missing (MNP), Endangered (EME), Involuntary (EMI).

Agencies must make sure dispatchers are prepared to handle phone calls and should consider allocating additional resources including from other law enforcement agencies.

- A Public Information Officer (PIO) should be appointed to handle the press. Once the advisory has been activated, media coverage may be overwhelming, especially for a small department. The PIO should be constantly updated to utilize the media as much as possible and receive the maximum exposure for the case.

The Missing and Endangered Person Advisory does not preclude any in-house procedures, policies or practices used by each law enforcement agency.

IV. THE FOLLOWING WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE ADVISORY IS ACTIVATED

- All Montana law enforcement agencies are notified through CJIN. The National Weather Service, the Department of Transportation and the Montana Lottery will also receive the information. The DOT and the Lottery will disseminate the information on their statewide systems at their discretion.
- Broadcasters and media in a select region or even statewide are notified by the National Weather Service EAS system or by e-mail or by fax. The requesting agency can select the areas where locator posters are sent to the media outlets.
- As directed by the requesting agency, border ports of entry or other public agencies will receive the information.
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) is contacted if the person is under the age of 18.
- Flyers created by the missing person locator program can be distributed locally or regionally as directed by each agency.
- Generally, a MEPA will expire after 24 hours unless a longer time period is requested. A MEPA can be updated or cancelled by the requesting agency at any time.

This advisory will be issued through the National Weather Service system, the Department of Transportation, and the Montana Lottery. This advisory will stay in effect for 24 hours unless the requesting agency requests that it be issued for a longer period, it is renewed, updated or cancelled.

1. The local law enforcement agency must enter the Missing Person in NCIC before a MEPA will be issued. If the requesting agency requests that an AMBER Alert be activated, or if the DOJ Helpdesk staff believes that the request meets AMBER Alert

criteria, the Helpdesk will contact the Division of Criminal Investigation concerning the AMBER Alert. If the agency believes that it meets the criteria for a MEPA listed above, the Helpdesk will proceed with the MEPA activation. The Helpdesk staff can consult with DCI on any request about a missing person.

2. The requesting law enforcement agency will send the DOJ Helpdesk an AM message describing the incident and e-mail a poster if they are able to create one. If the agency can not make a poster, they can provide the Helpdesk with information that can be used to create a poster to include photos if they have them, and the Helpdesk will create the poster for the requesting agency.

V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Montana DOJ can contact other states if the advisory needs to be sent outside of Montana.
- [A Child Is Missing](#) will contact residents and businesses in the area where the person was last seen by using an automated telephone system. The service is free and can be used for a missing child, an elderly or disabled person or a missing college student who lives on campus. Call the toll-free number (888) 875-ACIM (888-875-2246).
- [Team Adam](#) provides experienced child abduction investigators, technical assistance and equipment for free to agencies during investigations involving missing, abducted or exploited children. Call toll-free (800)THE-LOST (800-843-5678).
- [Project Alert](#) provides retired federal, state and local law enforcement officers who volunteer their time and expertise as unpaid consultants during investigations of missing, abducted or exploited children. All travel arrangements and costs are paid for by NCMEC. Call toll-free (800)THE-LOST (800-843-5678).
- [Laura Recovery Center](#) will help organize community ground searches. The nonprofit organization offers its services for free. Call toll-free (866)898-5723.

VI. RESOLUTION AND CANCELING OF THE CASE

When the case is resolved, the requesting agency must send the DOJ Helpdesk an AM message that lists the details of the resolution that **the requesting agency wants released to the public**. DOJ will then notify other agencies and groups involved that the case has been resolved.