



## Missing Persons

### 332.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidance for handling missing person investigations.

#### 332.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**At-risk** -Includes persons who are:

- (a) 13 years of age or younger.
- (b) Regardless of age, believed or determined to be experiencing one or more of the following circumstances:
  - Is out of the zone of safety for his/her chronological age and developmental stage.
  - Has a mental or behavioral disability.
  - Is drug dependent, including prescribed medication and/or illegal substances, and the dependency is potentially life-threatening.
  - Has been absent from home for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing.
  - Is in a life-threatening situation.
  - Is in the company of others who could endanger his/her welfare.
  - Is absent in a way that is inconsistent with established patterns of behavior and that cannot be readily explained. Most children have an established and reasonably predictable routine.
  - Is involved in a situation that would cause a reasonable person to conclude the person should be considered at risk.

**Missing person** -Any person who is reported missing to law enforcement when that person's location is unknown and considered at risk. This includes a person under the age of 18 whose location has not been determined and who has been reported missing, abducted, lost or is a runaway (ARS § 15-829; ARS § 36-339).

**Missing person networks** -Databases or computer networks that are available to law enforcement and are suitable for obtaining information related to missing person investigations. This includes the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and the Arizona Crime Information Center (ACIC).

#### 332.1.2 POLICY

The Peoria Police Department does not consider any report of a missing person to be routine and assumes that the missing person is in need of immediate assistance until an investigation reveals otherwise. The Peoria Police Department gives missing person cases priority over property-related cases and does not require a specific amount of time to have passed before beginning a missing person investigation.

**332.2 REPORT ACCEPTANCE**

Any employee encountering a person who wishes to report a missing person or runaway shall render assistance without delay. This can be accomplished by accepting the report in person (or by telephone in instances where the reporting person is unable to report in person due to extenuating circumstances) and initiating the investigation. Those employees who do not take such reports or who are unable to give immediate assistance shall promptly dispatch or alert an employee who can take the report.

A report shall be accepted in all cases and regardless of where the person was last seen, where the person resides or any question of jurisdiction.

In all cases involving a person missing under suspicious circumstances or a child under 14 years of age, the handling employee shall ensure that the Patrol Lieutenant and appropriate Criminal Investigation Section supervisor are notified. This Department shall not delay any reporting, investigation or action upon receipt of a report of a missing child under 14-years of age and shall evaluate all information and circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the child to determine whether immediate action is necessary.

**332.2.1 REQUIRED FORMS AND BIOLOGICAL SAMPLE COLLECTION KITS**

The Criminal Investigations Section Lieutenant shall ensure the following items and kits are developed and available:

- Missing Person Report Form
- Missing Person Investigation Checklist that provides investigative guidelines and resources that could be helpful in the early hours of a missing person investigation.
- Missing Person School Notification Form
- Medical Records Release Form
- Biological Sample Collection Kits

**332.3 INITIAL INVESTIGATION**

Officers or other employees conducting the initial investigation of a missing person should take the following investigative actions as applicable:

- Respond to a dispatched call as soon as practicable.
- Interview the reporting person and any witnesses to determine whether the person qualifies as a missing person and if so, whether the person may be at-risk.
- Notify a supervisor immediately if there is evidence that a missing person is either at-risk or may qualify for a public alert, or both (see the Public Alerts Policy).
- Broadcast a "Be on the Look-Out" (BOLO) bulletin if the person is under 14 years of age or there is evidence that the missing person is at-risk.
- Ensure that the entries are made into the appropriate missing person networks, as follows:
  - Immediately when the missing person is at-risk.
  - In all other cases, as soon as practicable, but not later than two hours from the time of the initial report.
- Complete the appropriate report forms accurately and completely and initiate a search as applicable under the facts.

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- Collect and/or review:
  - A photograph and fingerprint card of the missing person, if available.
  - A voluntarily provided biological sample of the missing person, if available (e.g. toothbrush, hairbrush)
  - Any documents that may assist in the investigation, such as court orders regarding custody.
  - Any other evidence that may assist in the investigation, including personal electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, computers)
- Contact the appropriate agency if the report relates to a missing person report previously made to another agency and that agency is actively investigating the report. When this is not practicable, the information should be documented in an appropriate report for transmission to the appropriate agency. If the information relates to an at-risk missing person, the officer should notify a supervisor and proceed with reasonable steps to locate the missing person.

### **332.4 REPORT PROCEDURES AND ROUTING**

Employees should complete all missing person reports and forms promptly and advise the appropriate supervisor as soon as a missing person report is ready for review.

### **332.5 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The supervisor shall review and approve missing person reports upon receipt and ensure resources are deployed as appropriate, initiating a command post as needed. The reports should be promptly send to the Records Unit.

The supervisor shall also ensure applicable notifications and public alerts are made and documented and that records have been entered into the appropriate missing person networks.

The supervisor should also take reasonable steps to identify and address any jurisdictional issues to ensure cooperation among agencies. If the case falls within the jurisdiction of another agency, the supervisor should facilitate transfer of the case to the agency of jurisdiction.

### **332.6 RECORDS UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The receiving employee shall:

- As soon as reasonable under the circumstances, notify and forward a copy of the report to the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the missing person's residence in cases where the missing person is a resident of another jurisdiction.
- Notify and forward a copy of the report to the law enforcement agency in whose jurisdiction the missing person was last seen.
- Notify and forward a copy of the report to the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the missing person's intended or possible destination, if known.
- Forward a copy of the report to the Criminal Investigations Section.

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The investigator assigned to a missing person investigation:

- Shall ensure that the missing person's school is notified as soon as practicable if the missing person is a juvenile (ARS § 15-829).
  - The notice shall be in writing and should also include a photograph.
  - The investigator should meet with school officials as appropriate to stress the importance of including the notice in the child's student file, along with the investigator's contact information if the school receives a call requesting the transfer of the missing child's files to another school.
- Shall notify the state registrar in the state of the child's birth. This notification shall include the child's name, date of birth and county of birth (ARS § 36-339).
- Should re-contact the reporting person and/or other witnesses within 30 days of the initial report and within 30 days thereafter to determine if any additional information has become available.
- Should consider contacting other agencies involved in the case to determine if any additional information is available.
- Shall verify and update ACIC, the NCIC and any other applicable missing person networks within 60 days of the original entry into the networks and every 45 days thereafter until the missing person is located (42 USC § 5780).
- Should continue to make reasonable efforts to locate the missing person and document these efforts at least every 45 days.
- Shall maintain a close liaison with the NCMEC if the missing person is under the age of 21 (42 USC § 5780).
- Should make appropriate inquiry with the coroner or medical examiner.
- Should obtain and forward medical records, photos, X-rays and biological samples, as applicable.
- Should attempt to obtain the most recent photograph for persons under 18 years of age if it has not been obtained previously.
- Should consider making appropriate entries and searches in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).

**332.8 PUBLIC AND AMBER ALERTS**

The Chief of Police shall designate a Public Alert Reporting Officer who is responsible for:

- Remaining familiar with the protocols for activating, maintaining and cancelling all applicable public alerts.
- Activating, maintaining and cancelling all public alerts.
- Being the point of contact with the Arizona AMBER Alert Oversight Committee.
- Ensuring the Department has AMBER Alert plan representatives who have completed appropriate training. Training may be provided by the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) or suggested by the Arizona AMBER Alert Oversight Committee.

The Arizona AMBER Alert is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement agencies and local broadcasters to rapidly disseminate an emergency alert to the public when a child is abducted or missing under emergency circumstances and the child may be in danger of

serious bodily harm or death. Certain criteria must exist before an AMBER Alert™ will be issued.

- An abduction of a child (under 18) has occurred.
- The abduction poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily injury or death to the child.
- The child is not a runaway and has not been abducted as a result of a child custody dispute, unless the dispute poses a credible or specific threat of serious bodily injury or death to the child.
- There is sufficient descriptive information about the child, abductor and the circumstances surrounding the abduction to indicate that an AMBER Alert will locate the child and/or suspect.
- There is information available to disseminate to the general public, which could assist in the safe recovery of the child and/or the apprehension of the suspect.

### **332.8.1 AMBER ALERT PROCEDURES**

An employee who received a report of an abduction of a child should advise the Public Alert Reporting or the authorized designee without delay. The Public Alert Reporting Officer will review the information to ensure that alert criteria are met and will be responsible for:

- Calling the AMBER Alert Hotline at the Arizona DPS Duty Office.
- Calling the appropriate AMBER Alert broadcast station and provide the necessary information to activate the EAS.
- Entering the appropriate information into the AMBER Alert System.
- The information entered in to the system may be updated by DPS or the Public Alert Reporting Officer.
- Promptly entering the missing child and crucial information surrounding the AMBER Alert and an AMBER Alert flag into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system.
- Promptly forwarding the alert information to all Arizona law enforcement agencies through the Arizona Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (ALETS) or other appropriate database.
- Ensuring that the appropriate telephone numbers for contact and follow-up are entered, including:
  - A telephone number for the public to provide tips and information on the missing child.
  - A confidential number restricted to other law enforcement agencies and the media to contact the Public Information Officer for follow-up and updates as an alternative to the 9-1-1 system.
  - A confidential number restricted to other law enforcement agencies to quickly provide information that could be crucial to the investigation or the safety of the victim.
- Obtaining a photograph of the missing person and/or suspect as soon as practicable and disseminating it to the appropriate entities.

The Public Information Officer should be constantly updated in order to utilize the media as much as possible and obtain the maximum exposure for the case. Involved personnel will

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continually provide the Public Alert Reporting Officer or the authorized designee and the Public Information Officer with any updated information.

**332.9 WHEN A MISSING PERSON IS FOUND**

When any person reported missing is found, the assigned investigator shall document the location of the missing person in the appropriate report, notify the reporting party and other involved agencies and refer the case for additional investigation if warranted.

The investigator should ensure that, upon receipt of information that a missing person has been located, the following occurs:

- Notification is made to NCIC, ACIC and DPS.
- A missing child's school is notified.
- The state registrar in the state of the child's birth is notified (ARS §36-339).
- Entries are made in the applicable missing person networks.
- When a person is at-risk the fact that the person has been found shall be reported within 24 hours to NCIC, ACIC and DPS.
- Notification shall be made to any other law enforcement agency that took the initial report or participated in the investigation.

**332.9.1 UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS**

Department members investigating a case of an unidentified person who is deceased or a living person who cannot assist in identifying him/herself should:

- Obtain a complete description of the person.
- Enter the unidentified person's description into the NCIC Unidentified Person File.
- Use available resources, such as those related to missing persons, to identify the person.

**332.10 CASE CLOSURE**

The appropriate Criminal Investigations Section Supervisor may authorize the closure of a missing person case after considering the following:

- Closure is appropriate when the missing person is confirmed returned or evidence matches an unidentified person or body.
- If the missing person is a resident of Peoria or this department is the lead agency, the case should be kept under active investigation for as long as the person may still be alive. Exhaustion of leads in the investigation should not be a reason for closing a case.
- If this Department is not the lead agency, the case can be made inactive if all investigative leads have been exhausted, the lead agency has been notified and entries are made in the applicable missing person networks as appropriate.

**332.11 TRAINING**

Subject to available resources, the Training Section Sergeant should ensure that members of this Department whose duties include missing person investigations and reports receive training that includes:

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- The initial investigation:
  - Assessments and interviews
  - Use of current resources, such as Mobile Audio Video (MAV)
  - Confirming missing status and custody status of minors
  - Evaluating the need for a heightened response
  - Identifying the zone of safety based on chronological age and developmental stage
- Briefing of department members at the scene.
- Identifying NCIC Missing Person File categories (e.g., disability, endangered, involuntary, juvenile and catastrophe).
- Verifying the accuracy of all descriptive information.
- Initiating a neighborhood investigation.
- Investigating any relevant recent family dynamics.
- Addressing conflicting information.
- Key investigative and coordination steps.
- Managing a missing person case.
- Additional resources and specialized services.
- Update procedures for case information and descriptions.
- Preserving scenes.
- Internet and technology issues (e.g., Internet use, cell phone use).
- Media relations.