

A **Silver Alert** is a public notification system in the United States to broadcast information about missing persons - especially seniors with Alzheimer's Disease, dementia or other mental disabilities - in order to aid in their return.

Silver Alerts use a wide array of media outlets—such as commercial radio stations, television stations, and cable TV—to broadcast information about missing persons. Silver Alerts also use variable-message signs on roadways to alert motorists to be on the lookout for missing seniors. In cases in which a missing person is believed to have gone missing on foot, Silver Alerts have used Reverse 911 or other emergency notification systems to notify nearby residents of the neighborhood surrounding the missing person's last known location.

Supporters of Silver Alert point to America's growing elderly population as a reason to support new programs to locate missing seniors. Approximately 6 in 10 dementia victims will wander at least once, health care statistics show, and the numbers are growing worldwide, fueled primarily by Alzheimer's disease.^[1] If not found within 24 hours, up to half of wandering seniors with dementia suffer serious injury or death.^[2]

History

In December 2005, Oklahoma state Representative Fred Perry (R-Tulsa) announced his intention to introduce an "AMBER Alert for seniors," which he dubbed "Silver Alert."^[3] In March 2006, the Oklahoma House of Representatives passed H.R. 1075, a resolution calling for a Silver Alert system to find missing seniors.^[4] In response to this non-binding resolution, the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety added Silver Alert notifications to the statewide alerts sent to law enforcement agencies and the media for rapid distribution.^[5] In April 2009, Governor Brad Henry signed legislation permanently establishing the Silver Alert program.^[6]

In Georgia, public efforts to locate missing seniors increased following the April 2004 disappearance of Mattie Moore, a 68-year-old Atlanta resident suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Eight months after Moore's disappearance, her body was found 500 yards from her home.^[7] The City of Atlanta created "Mattie's Call" to coordinate and support Metro Atlanta law enforcement, emergency management and broadcasters to issue an urgent bulletin in missing persons cases involving persons with Alzheimer's disease, dementia and other mental disabilities.^[8] Legislation to create a statewide Mattie's Call program was enacted in April 2006.^[9]

In Florida, Mary Zelter, an 86-year-old resident of Largo, drove away from her assisted living facility on Feb. 26, 2008 and never returned. Her body was found a week later 10 miles (16 km) away in the Intracoastal Waterway near a Clearwater boat ramp. Her submerged car was nearby. This tragedy prompted Pinellas County officials to create a Silver Alert pilot program that later grew into a statewide initiative.^[10]

[edit] National growth

29 states and New York City^[11] have Silver Alert or similar programs targeting missing seniors. More than 195 million people live in jurisdictions served by Silver Alert or a similar program.

20 states have missing senior recovery programs that are formally called “Silver Alert”:

- Arkansas^[12]
- Connecticut^[13]
- Florida^[14]
- Illinois^[15]
- Indiana^[16]
- Kansas^[17]
- Louisiana^[18]
- Maine^[19]
- Maryland^[20]
- Massachusetts^[21]
- Mississippi^[22]
- Nevada^[23]
- New Jersey^[24]
- North Carolina^[25]
- Oklahoma^[26]
- Rhode Island^[27]
- South Carolina^[28]
- Tennessee^[29]
- Texas^[30]
- West Virginia^[31]

Additionally, 9 states have programs to help locate missing seniors that are not officially called “Silver Alert” but contain criteria similar to existing Silver Alert programs:

- Alabama, Missing Senior Alert^[32]
- Delaware, Gold Alert^[33]
- Colorado, Missing Senior Citizen Alert^[34]
- Georgia, Mattie’s Call^[35]
- Kentucky, Golden Alert^[36]
- New Hampshire, Missing Senior Citizen Alert^[37]
- New York, Golden Alert^[38]
- Ohio, Missing Adult Alert^[39]
- Virginia, Senior Alert^[40]

SILVER ALERT INITIATIVES IN THE STATES

11/9/2010

Protecting Seniors with Cognitive
Impairments



Silver Alert Initiatives in the States

PROTECTING SENIORS WITH COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS

INTRODUCTION

In March 2009, NASUAD released a report that identified states that have a Silver Alert program, how they fund it, and how each administers the program. The report revealed that 18 states have a Silver Alert program, 14 states had pending legislation, and 18 states did not have legislation.

Several states have implemented Silver Alert programs since our last report. The following chart reflects the updated status of states across the country.

States with Silver Alert Programs		States with Pending Legislation	States Without Silver Alert Programs
Alabama *	Mississippi *	California	Alaska
Arizona	Missouri	Hawaii	Idaho
Arkansas **	New Hampshire	Massachusetts	Illinois
Colorado	New Jersey *	Pennsylvania	Iowa
Connecticut *	New Mexico		Maine
Delaware	North Carolina		Michigan
Florida	Oklahoma		Montana
Georgia	Ohio		Nebraska
Indiana *	Rhode Island		Nevada
Kansas *	South Carolina		New York
Kentucky	Tennessee *		North Dakota
Louisiana	Texas		Oregon
Maryland *	Virginia		South Dakota
Minnesota	West Virginia *		Utah
			Vermont
			Washington
			Wisconsin ***
			Wyoming

* State has legislation that went into effect since NASUAD's 2009 Report.

** Arkansas has a Memorandum of Understanding that establishes the Silver Alert Program.

*** Wisconsin governor vetoed legislation for a lack of funding.

States with Silver Alert Programs

Currently, there are 28 states that have implemented or will implement Silver Alert programs, an increase of 10 states since the NASUAD's last report. The following section provides a brief summary of the legislation that establishes the programs, the agencies administering the programs, and the program requirements for initiating an alert. The links below will provide you with further information on each state's Silver Alert program.

Alabama

The Alabama Missing Senior Citizen Alert Act (HB 33) went into effect on June 1, 2009. The purpose of this law is to provide immediate response to missing or lost seniors age 60 or older who are at risk of bodily harm or death and to gain the voluntary assistance of the broadcast media to help locate missing seniors. The Department of Public Safety, who administers this program, works collaboratively with other local and state law enforcement agencies, the Alabama Association of Broadcasters and licensed broadcasters in the state.

To view the legislation, please visit the following Web site.

<http://www.dps.state.al.us/ABI/pdf/MissingSeniorAct.pdf>

Arkansas

House Bill 2087, "An Act to Establish the 'Silver Alert System' for Adults Who Are Living with Dementia or Other Cognitive Impairment," was filed, but it never became law. However, in March 2009, the Arkansas State Police entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Arkansas Sheriffs' Association and the Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police to host an Internet website that provides Arkansas broadcasters and news organizations a means to receive Arkansas Silver Alerts that are shared with the public. Silver Alerts are disseminated for missing persons 18 years of age or older who are living with dementia or other cognitive impairment.

To view the legislation, please visit the following Web site.

<http://staging.arkleg.state.ar.us/ftproot/bills/2009/public/HB2087.pdf>

Connecticut

Substitute Senate Bill 451 went into effect July 1, 2009 establishing Connecticut's Silver Alert System. The Department of Public Safety's Missing Child Information Clearinghouse administers the program and notifies the public of missing persons 65 years of age or older and anyone 18 or over who has a mental impairment.

To view the legislation, please visit the following Web site.

http://search.cga.state.ct.us/drSearch_lga.html

Indiana

Governor Mitch Daniels signed Senate Bill 307 to establish the Indiana Silver Alert, effective July 1, 2009. The Indiana Clearinghouse for Information on Missing Children and Missing Endangered Adults administers the program and works collaboratively with private organizations and law enforcement agencies in alerting the public of missing persons age 18 or older with mental illness, dementia, or other mental or physical incapacity.

To view the legislation, please visit the following Web site.

<http://capwiz.com/ahca/in/webtravm/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.in.gov%2Fapps%2Fisa%2Fsession%2Fbill%2Fbillinfo%3Fyear%3D2009%26session%3D1%26request%3DgetBill%26doctype%3DSB%26docn%3D0307>

Kansas

The Kansas Silver Alert Plan was implemented on July 30, 2009 following a resolution that called for the establishment of this senior alert system, but did not require it by law (SHL Resolution 2506). It is administered by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, which collaborates with local law enforcement agencies and the media to alert the public of missing persons living with dementia or persons over age 65 with a medical or mental condition or one who is at risk of harming himself.

The following Web site provides the protocol and policies for the Silver Alert Plan.

<http://www.ksoq.org/page/attorney-general-establishes-silver-alert-protocol>

Maryland

In October 2009, Maryland established its Silver Alert Program (HB 192) that is designed to alert the public about missing persons with cognitive impairments such as Alzheimer's or dementia. The Department of State Police administers the statewide program and works collaboratively with the State Highway Administration on this initiative.

You can view the bill by going to the following Web site.

http://mlls.state.md.us/2009rs/fnotes/bil_0002/hb0192.pdf

Mississippi

The Mississippi Silver Alert System Act of 2010 (HB 664) went into effect July 1, 2010. The Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Public Safety will be responsible for implementing the statewide alert system. The purpose of the Silver Alert System is to provide a tiered, rapid response system to notify the public about missing endangered adults age 18 or older with dementia or other cognitive impairments. The Bureau of Investigation will work with local law enforcement agencies and the Mississippi Highway Patrol Headquarters Communication Center to alert the public about missing persons.

You can view the bill by going to the following Web site.

<http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2010/pdf/HB/0600-0699/HB0664PS.pdf>

New Jersey

The Silver Alert System Act went into effect on December 22, 2009. The State Police administers the program and disseminates missing person information on people age 65 or older to broadcast media, the Department of Transportation, the New Jersey Highway Authority, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, and the South Jersey Transportation Authority.

You can view the bill by going to the following Web sites.

http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/A3000/2844_11.HTM

http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/S2000/1844_11.HTM

Tennessee

The Tennessee Senior Alert Act went into effect on August 4, 2009. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation administers the Silver Alert system that provides a statewide system for the rapid dissemination of information on missing persons age 18 or older who have dementia or other cognitive impairment.

You can view the bill by going to the following Web site.

<http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/106/Bill/HB0346.pdf>

West Virginia

HB 2504 was signed into law by Governor Joe Manchin and went into effect on July 10, 2009 establishing the West Virginia's Silver Alert Plan. The State Police administers the program by providing alerts for cognitively impaired missing persons to broadcast media, the Department of Transportation, the Division of Highways, the West Virginia Turnpike Commission, and affected authorities. HB 2504 does not specify an age requirement of a cognitively impaired missing person.

You can view the bill by going to the following Web site.

http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Text_HTML/2009_SESSIONS/RS/BILLS/hb2504%20enr%20sub.htm

Pending Legislation

California

On December 22, 2008, Senators Alquist, Correa, and Oropeza introduced SB 38, a bill that would establish a missing senior person alert system. The bill specifies that a missing person would have to be 65 years of age or older and must have an impaired mental condition. As of August 27, 2009, there has been a second reading of the bill and it is currently being held in committee.

You can view the bill and its history by going to the following Web site.

http://www.legislature.co.gov/cgi-bin/port-postquery?bill_number=sb_38&sess=CUR&house=B&author=olquist

Hawaii

Since January 2009, Hawaii legislators have introduced six bills that would establish a Silver Alert system in their state. However, it appears that SB2226 SD2 HD1 is the only bill that has received considerable action. It was introduced January 21, 2010 and, as of March 12, 2010, it passed the second reading as amended in HD 1 and was referred to the Committee on Judiciary without opposition. The bill specifies that the public alert would be made for missing senior citizens and defines a senior citizens as one who is 65 years of age or older.

You can view the bill and its history by going to the following Web site.

http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2010/bills/SB2226_HD1_.pdf

http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2010/lists/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=SB&billnumber=2226

Massachusetts

H4344 (new draft of S322, H44, and H603) would establish a Silver Alert community response system to protect seniors. This Silver Alert system would be used to alert the public of missing adults with serious memory impairment such as Alzheimer's disease or other dementia. The last action recorded for this bill was on November 17, 2009 when the Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Business reported favorably on it and referred it to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

You can view the bill and its history by going to the following Web site.

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/186/ht04pdf/ht04344.pdf>

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/186history/h04344.htm>

Pennsylvania

On March 5, 2009, the General Assembly of Pennsylvania referred HB 726 to Committee on Aging and Older Adult Services. HB 726, which is also referred to as the Silver Alert for Missing Senior Citizens Act, would establish a statewide alert system for notifying the public of missing persons age 65 or older who have an impaired mental condition and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the senior citizens' health and safety. The Secretary of the Department of Aging is responsible for appointing a director to serve as the statewide coordinator of the alert system.

You can view the bill and its history by going to the following Web site.

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?year=2009&ind=0&body=FH&type=B&BN=0726>

NASUAD will continue to monitor pending legislations.

Legislation That Did Not Pass

Nevada

According to the Nevada Silver Haired Legislative Forum, AB 4 that would establish a statewide Silver Alert system was referred to the Health and Human Services Committee and died on April 11, 2009 due to no further action being taken on the bill.

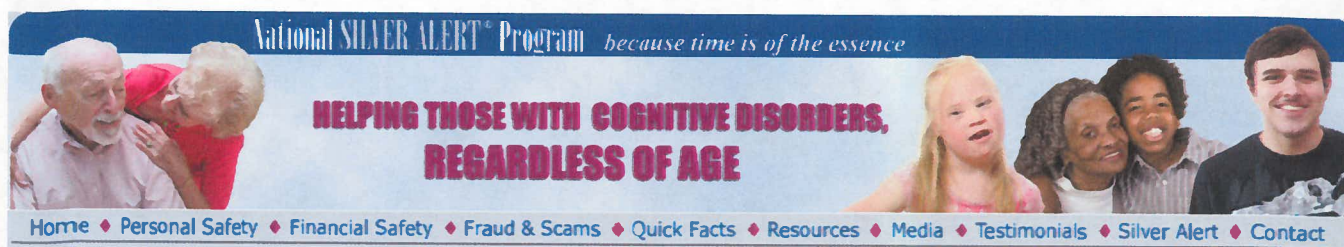
Vetoed Legislation

Wisconsin

Unfunded legislation to establish a Silver Alert program was vetoed by Governor Jim Doyle.

For more information:

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National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
1201 15th Street, NW
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Silver Alert



Modeled after the [Amber Alert](#), the Silver Alert is an emergency system in which law enforcement can broadcast regional or statewide alerts for missing seniors and/or other adults with Alzheimer's or other cognitive disorders.

A growing number of states are enacting laws that call for the development of the Silver Alert program and some have implemented their own notification systems.

Activation criteria varies from state to state, see list below for information on the Silver Alert program in your state.

Alabama	
Effective Date	March 25, 2009 AKA "Missing Senior Citizen Alert"
Administered By	Department of Public Safety
Age Requirement	Not specified
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	http://community.dps.alabama.gov/Pages/wfAlertListing.aspx?Type=30&Status=5,10
Other	House Bill 33

Arizona	
Effective Date	October 2008 AKA "Endangered Person Alert"
Administered By	Department of Public Safety
Age Requirement	Must be age 18 or older
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency or (602) 223-2212
Website	http://www.azag.gov/press_releases/oct/2008/End%20Person%20Alert%20Info.pdf
Other	

Arkansas	
Effective Date	April 2009
Administered By	The Arkansas State Police, working with the Arkansas Sheriffs' Association and Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police
Age Requirement	Adults with Alzheimer's or other cognitive disorders
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency Arkansas State Police: 501-618-8000
Website	https://www.ark.org/asp/alerts/mnaa/silver.php
Other	

Colorado	
Effective Date	February 2007
Administered By	Colorado Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Investigation (CBI)
Age Requirement	Must be age 60 or older
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency

Website	None
Other	House Bill 07-1005

Connecticut	
Effective Date	July 1, 2009
Administered By	Department of Public Safety
Age Requirement	(1) anyone 65 or over and (2) anyone 18 or over who has a mental impairment
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	None
Other	Senate Bill 451

Delaware	
Effective Date	July 2008 AKA "Gold Alert Program"
Administered By	The initial decision to issue a local Gold Alert is at the discretion of the investigating law-enforcement agency.
Age Requirement	Must be age 60 or older
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	None
Other	CHAPTER 85. STATE BUREAU OF IDENTIFICATION, Subchapter VII. Gold Alert Program for Certain Missing Persons

Florida	
Effective Date	October 8, 2008
Administered By	Florida Department of Law Enforcement
Age Requirement	Must be age 60 or older
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MCICSearch/Documents/SilverAlertFAQ.pdf
Other	House Bill HM 753

Georgia	
Effective Date	April 2006 AKA "Mattie's Call"
Administered By	Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Age Requirement	Missing disabled adults
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	http://alerts.gbi.georgia.gov/00/channel_modifieddate/0,2096,67865199_74426401,00.htm
Other	House Bill 728

Illinois	
Effective Date	January 1, 2010 AKA "Endangered Missing Person Advisory Program"
Administered By	The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA), in coordination with the Illinois State Police
Age Requirement	Older adults
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	http://www.state.il.us/aging/1news_pubs/news/2009-1230.htm http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/ShowPressRelease.cfm?SubjectID=1&RecNum=8136
Other	Senate Bill 0027

Indiana	
Effective Date	July 2009
Administered By	Indiana Clearinghouse for Information on Missing Children and Missing Endangered Adults
Age Requirement	Must be age 18 or older
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency or 800-831-8953
Website	http://www.in.gov/silveralert/index.htm http://www.in.gov/silveralert/2331.htm

Other	Senate Bill 307
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Kansas	
Effective Date	July 30, 2009
Administered By	Kansas Bureau of Investigation Communications
Age Requirement	Must be age 65 or older
Phone	contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	http://www.ksag.org/files/SilverAlertProtocol.pdf http://www.ksag.org/page/attorney-general-establishes-silver-alert-protocol
Other	SHL Resolution No. 2506

Kentucky	
Effective Date	July 2008 AKA "Golden Alert"
Administered By	Kentucky Division of Emergency Management
Age Requirement	Must be age 18 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency or (502) 607-1638
Website	none
Other	Senate Bill 125

Louisiana	
Effective Date	July 2008
Administered By	Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Age Requirement	Must be age 60 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	none
Other	House Bill 1378

Maine	
Effective Date	April 12, 2010
Administered By	Maine Department of Public Safety
Age Requirement	Must be age 18 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	none
Other	Legislative Documents: HP1138, LD 1610, item 1

Maryland	
Effective Date	October 2009
Administered By	Maryland State Police
Age Requirement	Anyone who may have a cognitive disorder
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency or (410)486-3101
Website	
Other	House Bill 192 Press Release

Minnesota	
Effective Date	July 2009 AKA "Brandon's Law"
Administered By	Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
Age Requirement	All ages
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	None
Other	S.F. No. 1146 (Minnesota Missing Person's Act)

Mississippi	
Effective Date	July 1, 2010 "Mississippi Silver Alert System Act of 2010."

Administered By	Mississippi Department of Public Safety
Age Requirement	Must be age 18 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	None
Other	House Bill 664, House Bill 664 Amended

Missouri	
Effective Date	Silver Alert House Bill still in limbo Current program is called "Endangered Person Advisory"
Administered By	Department of Public Safety
Age Requirement	Must be age 18 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	Website
Other	House Bill 1119

New Hampshire	
Effective Date	Approved July 29, 2009, Effective on July 1, 2010
Administered By	Unknown at this time
Age Requirement	Must be age 55 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	None
Other	House Bill 279

New Jersey	
Effective Date	December 23, 2009 law signed into effect
Administered By	State Police
Age Requirement	Must be age 65 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/A3000/2844_I1.HTM
Other	Assembly No. 2844 Senate Bill 1551 and Senate Bill 1844

New York	
Effective Date	February 20, 2009, bill introduced, but still not signed into law at this time (Apr 2010)
Administered By	State Police
Age Requirement	Must be age 18 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	None, but a list of missing persons is available online. web link
Other	Bills A05783, S04307

New Mexico	
Effective Date	The New Mexico Missing Persons Clearinghouse Issues a "Endanger Person Advisory"
Administered By	Department of Public Safety
Age Requirement	All ages
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency or (505) 827-9297
Website	http://missingpersons.dps.state.nm.us/
Other	

North Carolina	
Effective Date	Approved June 19, 2009
Administered By	Department of Crime Control and Public Safety
Age Requirement	All ages
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	http://www.nccrimecontrol.org/Index2.cfm?a=000003,000005,000081,001670 http://www.nccrimecontrol.org/div/ale/missingpersons/SilverAlertBrochure3c.pdf
Other	General Statute § 143B-499.8

Oklahoma	
Effective Date	November 1, 2009, passed Senate April 16, 2009
Administered By	Department of Public Safety - Commissioner of Public Safety
Age Requirement	Must be age 60 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	none
Other	House Bill 2030, 63 O.S. §1-1990.2

Ohio	
Effective Date	June 20, 2008 AKA "Missing Adult Alert"
Administered By	Ohio Emergency Management Agency
Age Requirement	Must be age 65 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency or 866-693-9171
Website	http://www.missingadults.ohio.gov/OhioMAA/Home.aspx
Other	Senate Bill 87, Sec. 5502.522

Pennsylvania	
Effective Date	September 1, 2009 (based on HB276, although no program confirmation can be found)
Administered By	State Police
Age Requirement	Must be age 65 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	none
Other	House Bill 2558 (2008), House Bill 726 (2009)

Rhode Island	
Effective Date	January 3, 2008 AKA ""Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program"
Administered By	State Police
Age Requirement	Must be age 60 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	none
Other	S7048 and H7048

South Carolina	
Effective Date	May 2010 AKA "The Endangered Person Notification System"
Administered By	South Carolina Law Enforcement Division Missing Persons - Missing Person Information Center
Age Requirement	All ages
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency or 803-737-9000
Website	none
Other	Article 5, Chapter 3, Title 23 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding Section 23-3-330, January 13, 2009. House Bill 3817 introduced on March 24, 2009. A192, R240, H3719 General Bill.

Tennessee	
Effective Date	August 4, 2009
Administered By	Tennessee Bureau of Investigation
Age Requirement	Must be age 18 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	none
Other	House Bill 346

Texas	
Effective Date	Sept 1, 2007
Administered By	Department of Public Safety

Age Requirement	Must be age 65 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency or Texas Silver Alert Coordinator (512) 424-2208
Website	ftp://ftp.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/amber/silver_alert_instructions.pdf
Other	

Virginia	
Effective Date	July 2007 AKA "Senior Alert System"
Administered By	Virginia State Police
Age Requirement	Must be age 60 or older
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	http://www.vasenioralert.com/index.htm
Other	§ 52-34.5

West Virginia	
Effective Date	April 22, 2009
Administered By	The State Police
Age Requirement	No minimum age
Phone	Contact your local law enforcement agency
Website	none
Other	House Bill 2504 §15-3B-3

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[print](#)

Fairbanks woman's death sheds light on harsh reality of living with Alzheimer's disease

by Dorothy Chomicz / dchomicz@newsminer.com

12.03.11 - 12:28 am

FAIRBANKS — When you are caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's, the possibility of that person wandering off is an ever-present worry. In fact, six out of 10 Alzheimer's patients will wander at some point, and many do so repeatedly, according to the Alzheimer's Association website (www.alz.org).

The situation becomes even more serious in places like Alaska, where severe weather conditions can spell death for someone who has wandered outside and is unprepared for the elements.

This danger was brought to reality this week when Bonnie L. Scott, a 63-year-old Fairbanks woman who suffered from Alzheimer's, became confused while driving an acquaintance home in Fairbanks and ended up 80 miles northeast on the Steese Highway.

Scott wandered away from her vehicle after running out of gas, and Alaska State Troopers were able to follow her footprints into the woods, where they found her body. She had died of exposure after walking by a manned Department of Transportation maintenance facility in which she could have found shelter and aid.

Most cases of wandering do not occur in vehicles and are instead instances of the individual simply walking out of the door while a caretaker is distracted or sleeping.

To minimize the risk of wandering, experts suggest making changes around the home, such as camouflaging exit doors by painting them the same color as the wall, and draping door knobs with same-color cloth.

Placing a mirror next to the door can also stop the potential wanderer — they either think there is someone else there, or they become distracted by their own reflection.

Extra door latches can be placed at the tops or bottom of doors, where they will not be noticed, and car keys should be kept hidden. Chimes or alarms can be placed on doors to alert the caregiver.

Since wandering is often caused by restlessness, fear or physical need, make sure that basics such as hunger, thirst and the need to use the toilet are all met regularly.

If it is physically possible, provide the individual with recreational opportunities such as short, supervised walks or get them to help with simple household chores. Reassure them if they feel agitated or fearful, and give them a routine to help them feel secure.

Even though caregivers are often tempted to keep a person's Alzheimer's a secret, it is important that neighbors and family members be told of potential wandering, and be provided with a good contact number. Always keep a current, clear photo of the individual on hand, and consider keeping one on file with your local police department.

Keep as much identification as possible on the person — place it in every coat, purse, pocket or wallet, and think about providing the person with an ID bracelet or necklace.

Since identification is only helpful once the person has been found, consider purchasing an electronic tracking device that can be used to locate them before tragedy occurs. According to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America website, a person with dementia "only stands a 50 percent chance of survival if they are not found within the first 24 hours."

Finally, do not leave the individual alone. Since it is virtually impossible for one person to keep an Alzheimer's sufferer in sight at all times, it is essential that the caregiver establish a support network that can help out and provide a break when needed.

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska provides services, information and education to Alaskans dealing with Alzheimer's and has five offices statewide. They can be reached at their Fairbanks office at 452-2277, or visited at www.alzalaska.org.

Contact staff writer Dorothy Chomicz at 459-7590.

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Celeste Hodge

From: O'Hare, Michael F (MVA) <mike.ohare@alaska.gov>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2012 1:34 PM
To: Celeste Hodge
Cc: Pierre, McHugh (MVA); Howell, Kelly A (DPS); Fisher, Bryan J (MVA); Carney, Roberta D (MVA)
Subject: FW: 27-LS1250A - An Act relating to missing vulnerable adult prompt response and notification plans
Attachments: Silver Alert Updated Report_11-9-10.pdf

Celeste,

Per your request, and after review of the draft legislation, I am providing the following response from our Emergency Operations Section:

A portion of the Alaska Amber Alert Plan involves the local law enforcement agency and the Alaska State Troopers providing additional "emergency public information" to broadcast outlets to assist with the recovery effort. Most Silver Alert plans revolve around that. Not using EAS, but notifying and providing information on the missing person, vehicle, etc, and the broadcast outlets voluntarily providing that information to their viewers/listeners. In many cases State DOTs or those who control highway signs would also post the information to the public, as well as the investigating law enforcement agency providing a BOLO alert in the state APSIN/NCIC systems.

Attached is a seven page report from the 2010 summary of States performed by the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities. The report is a summary of states that have plans, and the enabling legislation behind it. It doesn't speak to operational aspects.

From an EAS standpoint there is no event code that is designated for missing persons (adults), so we couldn't utilize EAS like we do for Amber alerts, which uses the special "Child Abduction Emergency" code.

We certainly could work with DPS on this plan, the same players from AST, DHS&EM, APD, and the Alaska Broadcasters Association could work out the plans that would be required by the bill/law.

So, to be clear, we have no issues on the draft legislation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mike O'Hare



Michael F. O'Hare

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