

SILVER ALERT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

EVERETT POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE NO. 1.24	ISSUE DATE: 21 Sept 2011
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I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The Silver Alert Community Response System was created in 2010 and can be found in Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 6A Section 18L, which states,

“The silver alert system shall be used, when appropriate, to alert public safety departments and private safety departments, when an adult with serious memory impairment such as Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia is reported to a police department as a missing person.”

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to officers dealing with a missing adult with Alzheimer’s or other dementia.

II. POLICY

Missing person reports involving an adult with a diagnosed or articulable signs of dementia shall be:

- A. Accepted regardless of the amount of time the person has been missing
- B. Recognized as a high risk situation
- C. Respond to the area where the person was last seen to conduct a search
- D. Promptly enter into NCIC as a missing person. Enter disabled in the type field.

- E. Promptly reported to the Massachusetts Missing Persons Clearinghouse, which when requested, will send a Silver Alert Message to appropriate public and private safety agencies.

Note: Although the law specifies adults, police should consider a similarly strong approach for missing persons with other impairments (e.g. autism)

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Adult*: a person 18 years and older.
- B. *Alzheimer's Disease (AD)*: The most common type of dementia. AD causes nerve cells in the brain to die, affecting a person's ability to remember, or think clearly and puts the person at risk of wandering and becoming lost.
- C. *Dementia*: Symptoms associated with a group of brain disorders that cause memory loss and a decline in mental function over time.
- D. *MMPC*: Massachusetts Missing Persons Clearinghouse is a service provided through the Commonwealth Fusion Center.
- E. *Private Safety Department*: An entity that provides emergency police, fire, ambulance or medical services excluding a municipality or a public safety department.
- F. *Public Safety Department*: A functional division of a municipality or a state that provides fire fighting, law enforcement, ambulance, medical or other emergency service.
- G. *Silver Alert*: A Commonwealth Fusion Center message sent to inform public and private safety agencies within a specific area that an adult with serious memory impairment has been reported missing.
- H. *Wandering*: A behavior exhibited by many AD Patients. Patients may wander without purpose, be searching for something, or trying to get to an old residence or place of work. Wandering is a high risk situation that may also represent a risk to the public if the AD patient is driving.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. What to Do When Person w/ Alzheimer's is Reported Missing

1. Respond quickly, 24 hours can be the difference between life and death in these cases.
2. Place a report on the NIC and issue a BOLO to neighboring PD's.

3. Report the incident to the Massachusetts Missing Persons Clearinghouse 978-451-3700
4. Check the area where the person was last seen, and periodically re-check the area. The subjects are most often found within a mile from where last seen. They usually do not respond to shouts or cry out for help.
5. Check familiar places, such as a nearby relative's home or a former neighborhood or job site where the missing person(s) may mistakenly think they still live or work.
6. Check with local hospitals, fire and ambulance service to ensure the person has not already been picked up.
7. Notify officers at change of shift of missing.
8. As appropriate, notify media, and use social media especially under any of the following conditions:
 - a. Person has a potentially life-threatening health problem
 - b. The weather is severe
 - c. The person has been missing for over 2 hours and an effort has already been made to find him/her. Particularly as night falls.
9. As appropriate, call for air or canine support.

B. What to Do When Finding a Lost Person w/ Alzheimer's

1. Persons with Alzheimer's can be sick or injured but unable to communicate the information. They should not be mistaken for street people, or assumed to be intoxicated. They are easily frightened but not normally violent. Their fear can cause them to sob, pace, or even try to get away from an officer. Your best response is to speak and act in a calm and reassuring manner. They may not understand you the first time, so don't be afraid to repeat yourself. These are generally frail men and women in their 70's and 80's. Avoid using restraints.
2. Approach from the front, make eye contact and identify yourself.
3. Move the person away from crowds and noise. He/she will take their actions from your tone of voice and body language.
4. Ask simple yes or no questions. Keep your instructions simple and positive, like "Please sit here. Everything will be okay."
5. Look for paper ID, personalized clothing labels, medical wristbands or ID bracelets. Check the NCIC network for a matching missing person.
6. Have the person transported to the hospital if he/she:
 - a. Needs medical attention

- b. Appears to be suffering from poor hygiene and obvious neglect
 - c. Has not been reported missing, has no ID and cannot give name or address. Let medical staff know the individual may be memory impaired so that they can provide proper supervision.
7. If the person does not need medical attention, and has a caregiver at home, return the person to their home.
 8. If the person does not need medical attention, but is living alone with no apparent supervision, note any potentially hazardous living conditions. Follow-up with state Elder protective Services.
 9. If the person disappeared from a nursing home, rest home or assisted living residence and does not need medical attention, return them to the facility.

C. Report Abuse – Mandatory Reporting

1. Mandated reporters shall notify the Executive Office of Elder Affairs when there is reasonable cause to believe that a person age 60 or older is suffering from, or dies as a result of abuse. This notification has two parts: an immediate oral report, followed within 48 hours by a written report (MGL C.19A sec15).
2. The term ‘Abuse’ as defined by MGL C 19A sec 14 includes the following:
 - a. An Act or omission which results in serious physical or emotional injury
 - b. Financial exploitation
 - c. Failure, inability or resistance of an elderly person to provide for him or herself one or more of the necessities essential for physical and emotional well-being without which the elderly person would be unable to safely remain in the community.

D. Resources/Contacts

1. Silver Alert System can be accessed by calling the Mass State Police 24-hour Communication Center at 508-820-2121.
2. 24 Hour Mass Missing Persons Clearing House, 978-451-3700, fax: 978-451-3707 or e-mail fusion@pol.state.ma.us
3. Medic Alert Safe return 24 hours at 800-625-3789. This national program of MedicAlert and the Alzheimer’s Association offers ID materials, counseling, safety suggestions and community service referrals for the public to prevent repeat incidents.

Silver Alert Community Response System

CRUISER CALL SHEET

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and primarily affects older adults. A small percent of people in their 40s, 50s and early 60s are also affected. Wandering and becoming lost is the most life threatening behavior associated with memory impairments such as Alzheimer's disease. Memory impaired older adults who wander from home or a care facility and become lost are at high risk of dehydration, hypothermia and injury from falls. Most have chronic health problems and are on medications they may not have with them or remember to take. A confused and disoriented person who is reported missing or is found wandering, especially an older adult, represents an emergency situation.

Enhanced Police Response

The Massachusetts Silver Alert Community Response System was created in 2010 under MGL Chapter 6A Section 18L, which states, "The silver alert system shall be used, when appropriate, to alert public safety departments and private safety departments when an adult with serious memory impairment such as Alzheimer's disease or other dementia is reported to a police department as a missing person." Assistance through the Silver Alert system can be accessed by calling the State Police 24-hour Communications Center at:

508-820-2121

WHAT TO DO ON REPORT OF A MISSING PERSON WHO MAY HAVE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

- Respond quickly. 24 hours can be the difference between life and death in these cases.
- Place a report on the NCIC network and issue a radio report (BOLO) to neighboring PDs.
- Note that some persons with Alzheimer's or other dementia may have personal locator devices.
- Periodically re-check the area where the person was last seen. These subjects are most often found within a mile from where last seen. They usually do not respond to shouts or cry out for help.
- Check familiar places, such as a nearby relative's home or a former neighborhood or job site where the missing person(s) may mistakenly think they still live or work.
- Notify officers at change of shift, and ask neighboring PDs to do the same.
- As appropriate, notify media, especially under any of the following conditions: 1) The person has a potentially life-threatening health problem; 2) the weather is severe; 3) the person has been missing for over two hours and an effort has already been made to find him, particularly as night falls.
- As appropriate, call for air or canine assistance from State PD. Other certified search and rescue teams, such as the state's Park Rangers, also have experience in these cases and work well with law enforcement.

WHAT TO DO ON FINDING A LOST PERSON WHO MAY HAVE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

As a first responder, keep in mind that people with Alzheimer's can be sick or injured but unable to communicate that information. They should not be mistaken for street people, or assumed to be intoxicated. They are easily frightened but not normally violent. Their fear can cause them to sob, pace, or even try to get away from an officer. **Your best response is to speak and act in a calm and reassuring manner.** They may not understand you the first time, so don't be afraid to repeat yourself. These are generally frail men and women in their 70s and 80s. Avoid restraints.

- Approach from the front, make eye contact and identify yourself.
- Move the person away from crowds and noise. He will take his action cues from your tone of voice, your body language. Ask simple yes or no questions. Keep your instructions simple and positive, like "Please sit here. Everything will be okay."
- Look for paper ID, personalized clothing labels, medical wristbands or ID bracelets. Check the NCIC network for a matching missing persons report.
- Transport the person to the hospital Emergency Department if he or she: 1) Needs medical attention; 2) appears to be suffering from poor hygiene and obvious neglect; 3) has not been reported missing, has no ID and cannot give a name or address. Let medical staff know the individual may be memory impaired so that they can provide proper supervision.
- If the person does not need medical attention and has a caregiver at home, return the person home. Advise the caregiver that wandering is a life-threatening behavior.
- If the person does not need medical attention but is living alone with no apparent supervision, note any potentially hazardous living conditions. Follow up with the state Elder Protective Services agency in your area in all cases where there is no supervision and the person appears to be at risk of self neglect or other harm.
- If the person disappeared from a nursing home, rest home or assisted living residence and does not need medical attention, return him or her to the facility. Advise staff to call the Alzheimer's Association during business hours for advice on care management.
- **Data collection and follow-up are critical.** Report incidents to the 24-hour Mass. Missing Persons Clearinghouse by calling 978-451-3700, faxing 978-451-3707, or emailing fusion@pol.state.ma.us.
- You may also call MedicAlert®+Safe Return® 24 hours at 800-625-3780. This national program of MedicAlert and the Alzheimer's Association offers ID materials, counseling, safety suggestions and community service referrals for the public to help prevent repeat incidents.

KEY ELDER SAFETY RESOURCES FOR POLICE

State Elder Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law

Under the Elder Abuse Reporting Law [GL c. 19A], as a mandated reporter, any officer who has reasonable cause to suspect the abuse, financial exploitation, neglect or self-neglect of a person age 60 or older must make an immediate report to the state Elder Protective Services Program. This can be done by calling the Elder Abuse 24 Hour Reporting Line at **1-800-922-2275**.

Registry of Motor Vehicles Request for Medical Evaluation or Immediate Threat Forms

Alzheimer's affects reaction time and visual-spatial perception. For information about medical evaluation, call the Medical Affairs Branch at **617-351-9222** (access form online at www.mass.gov/rmv/forms/21788.pdf). Under MGL c. 90 s. 22, a police officer may file an Immediate Threat form with the Driver Control Unit (fax requests to **617-351-9219**) if the officer reasonably suspects a driver's physical or mental condition presents a threat to public safety.

SILVER ALERT CRUISER CALL SHEET □ SIDE 2

August 2011 Page 8 of 12