



## Florida's Silver Alert Plan Frequently Asked Questions



### **When did Florida's Silver Alert Program begin?**

Florida's Silver Alert Plan was made effective by an Executive Order signed by Governor Charlie Crist on October 8, 2008.

### **What is the reason for implementing the Silver Alert Plan**

Florida's elderly population is growing and our state is committed to putting in place tools and technologies to ensure their safety and protection.

The Silver Alert is a standardized and coordinated law enforcement and state agency response to share information with the public to improve the chances of a safe recovery.

### **What are the criteria?**

1. The missing person must be 60 years or older and there must be a clear indication that the individual has an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (i.e., dementia). This must be verified by law enforcement  
or;  
under extraordinary circumstances when a person age 18 to 59 has irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties and law enforcement has determined the missing person lacks the capacity to consent, and that the use of dynamic message signs may be the only possible way to rescue the missing person;
2. The law enforcement agency's investigation must conclude that the disappearance poses a credible threat to the person's welfare and safety;
3. If a vehicle is involved and the statewide messaging system is requested, there must be a description of the vehicle, and a tag number to display on the Florida Department of Transportation dynamic message signs; and
  - o Local law enforcement must verify vehicle and tag information;
  - o The law enforcement agency must have entered the missing person into the Florida Crime Information Center and issued a statewide BOLO to other law enforcement/911 centers;
4. Local law enforcement has already activated a local or regional Alert by contacting media outlets in theirs and/or surrounding jurisdictions.

### **How does the Silver Alert get activated?**

If you have a loved one missing you should contact your local law enforcement agency immediately. Only a law enforcement agency may activate a Silver Alert. Local law enforcement will take a report, issue a Silver Alert if the criteria are met and in turn, will notify the FDLE if the person is driving a vehicle.

### **How long does a Silver Alert stay activated?**

The Local Law Enforcement Agency will determine the status of the Alert. If road signs are used, they will remain activated for a maximum of 6 hours unless the missing elderly person is rescued, or unless DOT is otherwise instructed.

### **What is the role of the public during a Silver Alert?**

The public can play an important role in the rescue of missing elderly persons with a cognitive impairment. According to the Alzheimer's Association, 95% of persons who go missing in these situations are found within a quarter mile from their place of residence or last location seen. When they hear about a Silver Alert in their area, they should actively make note of the description of the person and any additional information provided. If the public encounters or believes they see the vehicle or the missing person they should immediately call 911 or \*FHP (347) to respond. They should make note of the person's whereabouts, and if applicable, the vehicle tag, direction of travel and location observation (highway/street, city and county).

### **What is the role of the media?**

Media outlets have the option on whether or not to broadcast Silver Alert information. Large audiences can be reached through the media, thereby enhancing everyone's efforts in safely recovering a cognitively impaired missing person.

### **Does a caretaker, physician, or psychologist first have to verify or attest that the person has a cognitive impairment?**

The reporting party must articulate to the local law enforcement taking the report the fact that the missing person has a diagnosed cognitive impairment. The local law enforcement agency will determine whether the criteria are met.

### **What are the "extraordinary circumstances" for persons under the age of 60?**

Law enforcement has various search and tracking tools to find missing persons. To maintain integrity of the system and not dilute its effectiveness, the road signs will be used primarily for persons with irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties 60 years and older. However, road signs may be used in rare instances when that is the only viable method to locate a missing person under the age of 60 who otherwise meet criteria.

### **How does one file a missing person report?**

Contact the local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction where the missing person was last seen.

### **Do you use the EAS, as you do with AMBER Alerts?**

No, the EAS is restricted to child abductions, and is not used for any other cases involving missing children. However, just like with Missing Child Alerts, television and radio stations will be notified and the information can be broadcasted to the viewing or listening public.

### **How many seniors in Florida are diagnosed with Alzheimer's?**

According to the Alzheimer's Association, there are 501,000 cases of Alzheimer's in Florida.

### **What area(s) does the Silver Alert cover?**

The local law enforcement agency is responsible for contacting their local and regional media outlets. The dynamic message signs will be activated regionally or statewide when criteria are met.