

Amber Alert

OAAA Partners with NCMEC for Outdoor Advertising AMBER Alert Initiative

(New York, NY) – The Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA) today announced a new initiative that will use digital billboards to help recover abducted children across the country. OAAA, the industry group representing outdoor advertising companies, is partnering with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) as a secondary AMBER Alert™ distributor.

“Digital billboards are on the cutting edge of outdoor advertising technology and are uniquely suited to purposes like AMBER Alerts,” said Nancy Fletcher, OAAA’s president and CEO. “Because they can be updated by computer, AMBER Alerts on digital billboards can reach thousands of drivers within minutes of the Alert being issued.”

The AMBER Alert Program, operated by the U.S. Department of Justice, is a voluntary partnership between law-enforcement agencies, media outlets, and transportation agencies to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child abduction cases.

OAAA’s new initiative enhances the overall goal of the AMBER Alert program – to notify as many people as possible about a recent child abduction, and to provide information which can help in the search for the abducted child, suspected abductor, and/or suspected vehicle and in the safe return of the child. AMBER Alerts will be distributed by a central computer server to OAAA members participating in the program which fall within the specific, geographically targeted areas for the Alert.

“Today’s announcement reflects the dynamic progress we continue to make in improving the AMBER Alert system. This exciting initiative shows that public-private partnerships are central to the protection of our children,” said Jeff Sedgwick, the Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Office of Justice Programs and the National AMBER Alert Coordinator.

The program is named after 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, who in 1996 was abducted while riding her bike in her Texas neighborhood and later found murdered. Since the program’s inception in 1997, AMBER Alerts have been credited with the successful recovery of more than 399 children.

“The success of the AMBER Alert program is directly related to people’s willingness to get involved, which is invaluable,” said John Kelly, Chairman of NCMEC’s Board of Directors. “OAAA’s digital technology will allow thousands more to join the search and aid in the rescue and recovery of these children.”

Initial OAAA members participating in the partnership include Barnes Advertising, CBS Outdoor, Clear Channel Outdoor, Epic Outdoor Advertising, Fairway Outdoor Advertising, Lamar Advertising Company, Magic Media, Norton Outdoor Advertising, Titan Outdoor, and YESCO (which also designed the software for the program). These companies operate more than 900 digital billboards in the United States in hundreds of communities.

Community Testimonials

“When Senator Coleman and I landed, we’re driving in . . . and there were already billboards at 9:00 in the morning -- actual billboards -- telling people where to go for alternative routes.” --Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) - August 2, 2007

“High-tech billboards are the latest way to reach the public.” -- John Walsh, founder, America’s Most Wanted

“The (Wisconsin) Department of Justice thanks all our dedicated AMBER Alert partners: Wisconsin broadcasters, Dane County 911, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the Wisconsin Lottery, Outdoor Advertising Association of Wisconsin, state and local law enforcement, and citizens.” - Wisconsin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen

“Having that large (lottery) jackpot out there (on high-tech signs) does help our sales.” -- Stephanie Weyant, Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

“I think it’s the old adage, a picture says a thousand words. Not everyone listens to the local radio or reads the paper. So, this is another media outlet.” -- Port Huron (Michigan) Police Officer Chris Frazier. Digital billboards in Port Huron are helping law enforcement.