

Laurel Police Department – General Order  
Chapter IV, Section 100, Order 110 – Missing Persons  
March 19, 2013

**4 / 110.05 POLICY**

It shall be the policy of this agency to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons. Further, this agency holds that every person reported as missing will be considered at risk until significant information to the contrary is confirmed.

**4 / 110.10 PURPOSE**

It is the practice of the Department to prepare a Missing Persons report on all persons reported missing to this agency regardless of where the person was last seen or where the person resides.

**4 / 110.15 DEFINITIONS**

MISSING PERSON	A person of any age whose present location is unknown; when the reason for, and/or cause of the absence is also unknown.
FAMILY ABDUCTION	A non-custodial family member flees with a child, usually in direct violation of a court ordered custody agreement.
LOST OR OTHERWISE MISSING	A child who becomes separated from parents or caretakers under circumstances not indicating the likelihood of an abduction or voluntary absence.
MISSING ADULT	Eighteen (18) years of age or older; and Whose absence is contrary to his/her a normal pattern of behavior and may be due to one or more of the unusual circumstances listed under 4/110.15, Definitions, Unusual Circumstances.
MISSING CHILD	Younger than 18 years of age; and Whose whereabouts are unknown to his/her parent, guardian, or responsible party.
CRITICAL MISSING CHILD	Any child missing under seventeen years of age.
NON-FAMILY ABDUCTION	A child is taken by an unknown individual, through force or persuasion, usually in furtherance of additional victimization. This is a primary criterion for activation of the Amber Plan
RUNAWAY - Or Voluntarily Missing Child	Most often a teenager, who leaves home voluntarily for a variety of reasons.
THROWAWAY or ABANDONED CHILD	A child whose caretaker makes no effort to recover the child who has run away, or who has been abandoned or deserted.
UNIDENTIFIED CHILD	Any person under the age of 18 years of age, who is unable or unwilling to provide his/her own name and contact information for a caretaker.
CRITICAL MISSING ADULT	An adult (over 18 years of age) who suffers from Alzheimer's Disease, dementia or senility;

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An adult who is mentally diminished;

An adult who is physically handicapped;

An adult who has voiced suicidal intentions or who has made past attempts at suicide;

An adult who is drug dependent, who is dependent on legally prescribed medications vital to his/her well-being; and/or

An adult who is missing under circumstances that indicate foul play.

**UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

A missing child thirteen (13) years of age or younger.

A child or adult who is missing and believed to be one or more of the below noted items:

Out of the zone of safety for his/her age and physical and mental condition.

Mentally diminished, developmentally disabled, emotionally disturbed, or the victim of disease who may have difficulty communicating with others about needs, identity or address/contact information.

Drug dependent, whether relating to prescription or illicit substances.

A potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation.

In a life-threatening situation. The environment in which the person is missing may be particularly hazardous, whether a highway for a young child, an all-night truck stop for a teenager or inclement weather for a child or elderly missing person.

Absent from home more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing.

Believed to be with persons who could endanger the welfare of the missing person.

Is absent under circumstances inconsistent with established patterns of behavior.

NCMEC  
SCMC

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children  
State Clearinghouse for Missing Children

**4 / 110.20 PROCEDURES**

**A. GENERAL**

1. The Department holds that every person reported missing will be considered 'at risk' until significant information to the contrary is confirmed.

**B. PATROL OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The responding officer will conduct a thorough preliminary investigation and insure that an immediate and maximum possible effort is made to locate the subject.

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- a. This process includes the completion of the State of Maryland Missing Persons Report and a general lookout broadcast on the radio.
- b. There is no waiting period for beginning an investigation on a missing person.
2. If a 'Critical Missing Child', 'Unusual Circumstances' and/or 'Critical Missing Adult' are determined to exist the officer should contact a squad supervisor immediately.
  - a. Additionally, prior to entry into MILES/NCIC, a supervisor will be contacted by the reporting officer for review of the case.
3. Within one (1) hour of the start of the investigation, the subject shall be entered into MILES/NCIC by the PCS on duty.
  - a. The PCS should also broadcast a more detailed lookout to all units.
4. If possible, a recent photograph of the subject should be placed on roll call with a lookout form.
5. For all missing non-critical adults and children, the initial reporting officer will be responsible for all follow-up activity for the first 30 days following the report date.
  - a. The first follow-up contact will take place within 24-hours for a missing adult and within 12-hours for a missing child.
  - b. Follow-up contacts will be made at least every 7 days thereafter until the person returns or the case is forwarded to SOD.

C. PATROL SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The supervisor will obtain briefing and written reports from the first responding officer and any other agency personnel involved in the investigation.
2. Utilizing the information received, the supervisor will:
  - a. Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.
  - b. Determine whether the circumstances warrant classifying the missing person as a 'Critical Missing Child' or 'Critical Missing Person', based on all information and any unusual circumstances that have been noted.
  - c. Ensure that all required resources, equipment and assistance necessary has been requested and expedite their availability.
  - d. Determining if the circumstances surrounding the missing person warrant the need for a search.
  - e. In the case of a critically missing individual, establish a command post away from the residence.
  - f. In the event that the missing person is classified as a 'Critical Missing Child' or 'Critical Missing', the Special Operations Division shall be notified.
    - 1) The supervisor shall make this notification.
  - g. The supervisor will take charge and coordinate the search unless relieved by Special Operations Division or a member of the command staff.

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- 1) The decision to terminate a search for a critical missing person will be made by a command officer.
- 2) In all cases of a 'Critical Missing Child' the Special Operations Division shall assume responsibility for the investigation of same.

D. SPECIAL OPERATION DIVISION [SOD] RESPONSIBILITIES

1. SOD will respond to all cases where the case involves a Critical Missing Child, Suspicious or Unusual Circumstances exist or when the supervisor determines that SOD should be notified.
2. In cases of critically missing adults and children, an alert shall be broadcast as quickly as possible via the NCMEC system to surrounding police jurisdictions.
  - a. While the main purpose of this system is to aid in the recovery of missing and exploited children, it can also be used to create posters and send broadcasts for critically missing / at risk adults.
  - b. Additionally, if the situation warrants it, the Maryland Amber Plan will be activated.
3. A copy of all Missing Person reports will be sent to SOD.
  - a. Follow-up contact with the reporting person should take place within 24 hours except in the case of missing children where the follow-up contact must take place within 12 hours.
  - b. Follow-ups will be conducted at least every 7 days, thereafter until the person returns.
  - c. In the case of a child, once the initial 30 day period has passed, SOD is responsible for preparing an NCIC missing persons packet and forwarding it to the Maryland Center for Missing Children no later than 10 days after the 30 day period.

E. COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Communications personnel receiving a report of a missing person will be responsible for:
  - a. Determining if circumstances of the report meet the definition of a missing child or adult as set forth in Section 4/110.10.
    - 1) By questioning the caller about the circumstances of the report, the call-taker can make a preliminary assessment about the level of risk to the missing person.
    - 2) This assessment shall also prepare the call-taker to promptly activate additional response protocols if necessary.
  - b. Immediately dispatching an officer to the scene of the report
  - c. A supervisor and investigator should be notified of every reported incident in which "unusual circumstances" are determined to exist

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2. A critical responsibility of the call-taker is to obtain sufficient information from the reporting party to broadcast a radio message that alerts other officers about the circumstances of the person's disappearance.
  - a. Information should include the person's height, weight, hair and eye color and clothing as well as the location where last seen.
  - b. The radio alert should contain any information known about a possible abductor with description of possible suspect, vehicle and direction of travel.
3. Within one (1) hour of the start of the investigation, the subject should be entered into METERS/NCIC by the PCS on duty.
  - a. The PCS should also broadcast a more detailed lookout to all units.
4. When it is determined that a teletype would be appropriate on a missing adult or child, the following procedures will be followed:
  - a. Identify appropriate/surrounding jurisdictions to receive the teletype from information provided by the investigating officer(s).
  - b. METERS guidelines require that the officer identify which specific locations should be checked.
  - c. Document the teletype number for inclusion in the report.
5. Contact SOD personnel, if necessary.

F. RETURNED MISSING PERSONS

1. A missing person who returns without indication of unusual or criminal circumstances should be removed from MILES/NCIC and a supplement form completed by the officer who verifies the subject is no longer missing.
  - a. If the subject was a victim of a crime or unusual circumstances, he/she should be removed from MILES/NCIC and a follow up investigation should be initiated into the related crime or incident.

G. THROWAWAY/ABANDONED CHILDREN

1. When a child is reported missing, but the caretaker makes no effort to recover him/her or indicates to officers that they do not wish the child to return to the home, a report will be made to the Prince George's County Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services by the investigating officer/detective within 24-hours.
2. If a child is located who is a runaway, but was never reported as such by his/her caretaker, the Prince George's County Department of Social Services / Child Protective Services will be contacted within 24-hours of the location of the child.
  - a. Social Services personnel will be provided with a copy of all documentation relating to the case.

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- b. If necessary, officers will assist the Department of Social Services in a child neglect investigation. Newborns abandoned under the Safe Haven Act are addressed in General Order 4/114.

H. UNIDENTIFIED CHILDREN

1. If a child is located, who is unable for any reason to provide his/her own name or the name and contact information for a parent/caretaker/guardian, all efforts will be made to determine the identity of the child and the location from which he/she is missing.
  - a. The fingerprints of the child will be taken and submitted to the FBI for possible identification.
  - b. Additionally, an NCIC search, a search of the NCMEC database online, a review of missing children flyers stored in SOP, etc. are all initial means to identify the child.
  - c. If these resources fail, the Prince George's County Department of Social Services will be contacted by the investigating officer.

I. MISSING CHILD PROVISIONS

1. If the person reported missing is a juvenile (under the age of 18), the investigating officer must determine how the case should be classified.
2. Any missing child (whether classified as a critical missing person or not) can be entered in the NCMEC system by way of a NCMEC bulletin or alert.
3. SOD personnel trained to create NCMEC alerts will enter the pertinent information in the dedicated NCMEC computer to create a poster of the missing child.
  - a. Based on the information received by the investigating officer, the case can be classified as an abduction, family abduction, critical missing, or runaway.
  - b. The poster will then be sent via the NCMEC system to areas where the child may be, which can range from local distribution
    - 1) Within a few miles of the Laurel area to a nationwide distribution.

J. CRITICAL MISSING CHILD PROVISIONS

1. For the purposes of Departmental reporting, the following criteria should be used in making the determination on whether the missing child should be classified as a critical missing person:
  - a. The missing child has not been the subject of a prior missing person report;
  - b. The missing child suffers from a mental or physical handicap or illness;
  - c. The missing child disappeared under suspicious or dangerous circumstances;
  - d. The reporting person has reason to believe the child may have been abducted;
  - e. The missing child has previously been the subject of a child abuse report with any law enforcement agency; and/or
  - f. The missing child is under seventeen (17) years of age.
2. In cases where the child is designated critical, the officer shall ensure that the following steps are taken:

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- a. State of Maryland Missing Persons Report is completed;
  - b. A general broadcast is made, teletype sent (if appropriate) and the child's information is entered into MILES/NCIC;
  - c. Notify NCMEC and forward to SCMC a copy of the missing persons report;
  - d. Enlist the aid of the Department of State Police, when appropriate in locating the missing child;
  - e. If abduction is confirmed, the Investigative Services Division or On Duty / On Call Commander will determine whether the criteria for activating the MD Amber Plan has been met; and
  - f. Have a supervisor respond to the scene to determine the need for additional personnel or if the conditions dictate, a search.
3. If the conditions specified in General Order 4/110.20.J.1 do not exist the following is to be done:
- a. Immediately seek to determine the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the missing child and implement the procedures set forth in General Order 4/110.20.J.2 within twelve (12) hours of the filing of a report regarding a missing child, if the missing child has not been located.
4. If a missing child has not been located within twenty four (24) hours of the filing of a missing persons report and the Department or the Department of State Police have reason to believe that the missing child may be located in a jurisdiction other than the jurisdiction where the missing persons report was filed, the Department of State Police shall enter the investigation and assist the Department in efforts to locate the missing child.

**K. RETURNED MISSING CHILD**

1. If the Department is notified of a missing child's return, the investigating officer will complete a supplement report verifying the return of the child and the circumstances surrounding his/her absence. The child will also be removed from MILES/NCIC.
  - a. If the juvenile is a missing person from another jurisdiction and no criminal or unusual circumstances are indicated, the officer will complete a J-2 and Juvenile Recognizance Form.

**4 / 110.25 GOVERNING LEGISLATION AND REFERENCES**

National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. 5779, Reporting Requirements  
National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. 5780, State Requirements  
Adam Walsh Child Protection Act of 2006, 42 U.S.C. 16911  
Maryland Code, Family Law, Title 9. Child Custody and Visitation, Subtitle 4. Missing Children, Section 402, Determination of Law enforcement Agency Upon Receipt of Report  
Maryland Code, Family Law, Title 9. Child Custody and Visitation, Subtitle 4. Missing Children, Section 403, Clearinghouse for Missing Children  
CALEA Standards 41.2.5, 41.2.6

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**4 / 110.30 ANNEX**

None