## Amber alert is for missing children

DEAR ABBY: Time is the enemy when a child is abducted. To help in the search, communities must mobilize quickly. That is why it's critical that every community have an AMBER Alert plan. Understanding how it works may save a child's life.

AMBER Alert was named to honor the memory of 9-year-old Amber murdered in Arlington, Texas, seven



years ago.

Outraged following her brutal murder, the community was determined to fight back. One day, during a local talk radio show, some listeners called in and suggested that radio stations use the Emergency Alert System to warn the public about abductions in the same way they do tornadoes. At that Hagerman, who was abducted and moment, the idea to create an early warning system for child abductions

was born, proving that just a few people can make a difference in effecting change.

In 2001, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) launched a campaign to roll out the AMBER Alert program across America. At that time, there were only 27 such programs in the United States. Today, the program has grown to 93 plans, 46 of them statewide. It has also been adopted in parts of Canada and England. One hundred children have been recovered since the program began in 1996.

Today, the AMBER program (which stands for America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) has become a successful partnership between law enforcement agencies and radio and television stations to activate emergency bulletins to the public when a child is abducted and believed to be in danger.

their children:

ment

ING:

your child on hand.

cal records are located.

1. Keep a complete description of

2. Update it by taking color photo-

3. Keep copies of your child's fin-

4. Keep a sample of your child's

5. Know where your child's medi-

6. Have your dentist prepare and

maintain dental charts for your child.

IF YOUR CHILD GOES MISS-

1. Immediately report your child to

2. Ask the law enforcement agency

your local law enforcement agency.

graphs of your child every six months.

gerprints - prepared by law enforce-

DNA, such as several strands of hair.

I hope you will engage your readers to promote this worthy program in their communities. — ERNIE ALLEN, PRESIDENT, NCMEC

DEAR ERNIE: Thank you for an important letter. If ever a Dear Abby column should be kept in a safe place where it can be immediately accessible in an emergency, this is it. My readers are the most caring, concerned and engaged — people in the world. I am sure they recognize the importance of the AMBER Alert system. With that in mind, here is what parents should do to better safeguard

Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Persons File.

3. Limit access to your home until law enforcement arrives and has the opportunity to collect possible evidence.

4. Give law enforcement investigators all the information you have on your child, including fingerprints, photographs, complete description and the facts and circumstances related to the disappearance.

5. Call NCMEC at 1-800-THE LOST (1-800-843-5678).

Readers, more safety information can be obtained in "Personal Safety for Children — A Guide for Parents' by visiting the NCMEC Web site: www.missingkids.com. It is available in English or Spanish

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