



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Gov. Blagojevich proclaims January 13 AMBER Alert Awareness Day**  
***AMBER Alert Task Force announces poster contest and encourages teachers to discuss child safety issues with students***

SPRINGFIELD — Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today proclaimed January 13 AMBER Alert Awareness Day in Illinois to mark the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abduction and brutal murder of Amber Hagerman, who was kidnapped while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas. The tragedy led to the creation of the AMBER Alert System which now helps to find missing children in all 50 states.

““Today as we honor the memory of Amber Hagerman, we reinforce our commitment of protecting all children with the AMBER Alert system,”” said Gov. Blagojevich. ““The AMBER Alert is not just a crime deterrent, but it is assisting us in the search and safe return of the children across the state.””

To mark the anniversary in Illinois, a poster contest is being sponsored by the Illinois AMBER Alert Task Force for grades K-12. The theme for the poster contest is ““Bringing Our Missing Children Home.”” The fifth-grade winner’s entry will also be submitted in the National Missing Children’s Day Poster Contest. This competition will also provide teachers with an opportunity to teach students about child abduction and safety issues. The contest will begin on January 13 (AMBER Alert Awareness Day) and conclude on May 25 (Missing Children’s Day).

AMBER stands for **A**merica's **M**issing: **B**roadcast **E**mergency **R**esponse. It is a tool used by law enforcement, in combination with other means, to bring about the safe return of an abducted child. The goal of the AMBER Alert is to instantly notify an entire community to assist in the search for and safe return of the child. According to the U. S. Department of Justice, the AMBER Alert system is a proven success and has helped rescue more than 370 children nationwide.

Gov. Blagojevich created the Illinois AMBER Task Force in April 2003. At that time, Illinois was one of only two states in the nation to create a partnership with the National Weather Service and the Broadcasters Association to alert the public about missing children. Through the partnership, the Illinois State Police has been able to send information on abducted children to radio and television outlets throughout the state for immediate broadcast.

The Illinois AMBER Alert Notification Plan is a voluntary partnership between law-enforcement agencies, broadcasters, and the National Weather Service designed to assist children under the age of 16 who have been abducted and are at risk. The alert plan can be activated when reliable information about a suspected kidnapping is available. Reliable information includes appearances or vehicle descriptions which could lead to apprehension of the suspect and recovery of the child.

““Over the years we’ve seen that the AMBER Alert System has become a critical tool for law enforcement in rescuing children that are in danger,”” said Illinois State Police Director Larry G. Trent. ““By working with communities and schools throughout the state, we can help increase awareness about the dangers of child abduction and further protect our children.””

In the event a child, adult, or vehicle fitting the AMBER Alert description is spotted, immediately call the telephone number given in the AMBER Alert and provide authorities with as much information as possible. For additional information on AMBER, visit the Department of Justice Web site: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/amberalert/home.html](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/amberalert/home.html). Information relating to the contest can be found on the Illinois AMBER Alert Task Force Web site, [www.amberillinois.org](http://www.amberillinois.org).