

Wisconsin Policy
Regarding the Use of VMS Signs For Child Abduction
(AMBER) Alert Messages

A primary mission of the Wisconsin Department Transportation (WisDOT) is the safe and orderly movement of traffic on its roadways. It is the policy in Wisconsin to display only real-time information that conveys current traffic safety and congestion information on Highway Variable Message Signs (VMS).

In cooperative effort, Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) and WisDOT developed criteria to adapt this policy to accommodate AMBER (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Alerts. Only credible and verifiable real-time information, where it is immediately crucial to the safety of the victim to disseminate the information to the public, will be displayed on these VMS signs. Law enforcement activates an Amber Alert when circumstances meet the following criteria: the abducted child is of a pre-determined age; the law enforcement agency believes the child has been abducted; the agency believes the abducted child is under threat of serious bodily harm or death.

The Dane County Public Safety (911) Communications Center will consult with the investigating agency prior to requesting any VMS sign activations. WisDOT will only respond to AMBER alert requests from the Dane County Public Safety (911) Communications Center. The two agencies shall jointly agree upon the most appropriate VMS signs to use and the length of time to display the message (initially 3-5 hours). The message displayed on the VMS signs will be "Child Abduction Tune into your Local Radio Station".

Nothing in this policy suggests a requirement to pre-empt traffic related safety messages, e.g. road closure and detour information, etc. It may be necessary to turn off an AMBER alert sign that creates a traffic hazard. In all cases, messages shall maintain the credibility of the VMS system.

This Policy exclusively applies to the use of permanently installed overhead VMS signs.

Signature: _____
Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager
Department of Justice

Date: _____

Signature: _____
Secretary Frank Busalacchi
Department of Transportation

Date: _____