

ARIZONA ATTORNEY GENERAL
TERRY GODDARD



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statewide Endangered Person Alert System Announced

(Phoenix, Ariz. – October 22, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard, Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) Director Roger Vanderpool, and Art Brooks, President and CEO of the Arizona Broadcasters' Association, today announced the creation of a new statewide public safety alert system.

The Arizona Endangered Person Alert system will notify the public when an adult suffering from a significant health problem or a medically-diagnosed disability (such as Alzheimer's disease) goes missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances.

"The Endangered Person Alert system will provide critical protections for Arizona's vulnerable adults. This new statewide resource will provide greater security and peace of mind to families caring for loved ones with dementia and other serious health problems," Goddard said. "I appreciate the partnership of the Department of Public Safety and the Arizona Broadcasters Association, which made this alert system possible."

The alert is a voluntary collaboration between law enforcement and broadcasters statewide. It employs an existing DPS media notification system and therefore creates no additional costs to state or local agencies.

"This new alert procedure will expedite the recovery of missing adults. It provides clear criteria to law enforcement and gives broadcasters the tools to protect the most vulnerable members of their communities," Brooks said.

The Endangered Person Alert will be initiated by DPS when local first responders determine that providing information to the public could assist in the safe recovery of a missing person. Criteria for issuing an alert include:

- Is the missing person 18 years old or older?
- Is the person missing under unexplained, involuntary or suspicious circumstances?
- Is the person believed to be in danger of death or serious injury because of health, a medically diagnosed mental or physical disability, hazardous environmental or weather conditions, being in the company of a potentially dangerous person or facing some other factor that may put him/her in peril?
- Has the incident been reported to a law enforcement agency?

If these criteria are met, local first responders handling the case may contact DPS to initiate an alert. Through its media notification system, DPS will provide information about the individual

and the circumstances of his/her disappearance to radio and television broadcasters as well as local businesses.

This new system is another excellent example of the partnership between the Arizona Broadcasters Association and law enforcement,” Vanderpool said. “As we’ve seen in many cases, getting a missing person’s description out to the media makes a huge difference in resolving a case. This will enable all of us to work smarter and faster and assist families in their search for missing loved ones.”

Like the Amber Alert system for missing children, the Endangered Person Alert relies on community members to assist in finding individuals who have gone missing and are believed to be in danger. There are significant differences, however, between the two systems. The Endangered Person Alert relies on broadcasters to voluntarily provide information to their audiences. Freeway signs will not be activated for an Endangered Person Alert.

Additionally, Endangered Person Alerts will be tailored to the circumstances of each case, and search information can be targeted at specific areas. For example, an alert about an individual who goes missing while walking will be targeted to broadcasters in the local vicinity. An alert for an individual who disappears while driving will be provided to broadcasters in a much larger region, as the driver has the potential to travel a long distance in a short period of time.

The Endangered Person Alert system was developed by a statewide committee of law enforcement and senior advocacy groups, including the Attorney General’s Office, Arizona Department of Public Safety, Arizona Broadcasters’ Association, Adult Protective Services, AARP and the Arizona Alzheimer’s Association. It will go into use in early November.

A fact sheet on the Endangered Person Alert system is available on the Attorney General’s Web site, www.azag.gov.

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