

Wireless Amber Alerts Move to WEA Program Dec. 31

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Wireless Amber Alerts will migrate over to the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) program at the beginning of 2013.

CTIA, The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and Syniverse announced today that on December 31, 2012, the Wireless Amber Alerts program will end operations. In that program's place, the 700,000 cellphone users across the country that are enrolled in the program will now receive free, automatic notifications about abducted children in their area as part of the WEA program.

CTIA and the wireless industry joined the FCC and FEMA to offer WEA to supplement the existing Emergency Alert System. Consumers with WEA-capable smartphones and feature phones and services are automatically enrolled to receive AMBER Alerts for free, along with the Presidential and Imminent Threat Alerts.

The WEA Amber Alerts send messages to wireless customers with WEA-capable devices in the area where a child has been abducted, even if the wireless customer isn't from the area. For example, if a Chicago resident was visiting Boston and a WEA Amber Alert was issued in Boston, the subscriber would receive the alert. At the same time, if an alert was issued in Chicago, the subscriber would not receive it while in Boston.

"Since people were increasingly relying on their wireless devices in 2005, it made sense to send a succinct text message to alert users so they would be on the lookout for the kidnapped child and abductor in their area. We are proud to have worked with these entities on this outstanding program and know the WEA Amber Alerts will be an even better tool to help find abducted children," said Steve Largent, president and CEO of CTIA, in a statement.

Before Wireless Amber Alerts, Amber Alerts were issued via television, radio and Department of Transportation highway signs when a child was believed to have been abducted and in danger. The wireless industry launched the Wireless Amber Alerts program in 2005 because its members believed its technology could expand the Alerts' reach to aid in the recovery of abducted children.

The 700,000 wireless customers currently enrolled in Wireless Amber Alerts will receive text messages about the transition and alternative sources for receiving Amber Alerts.

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