



PAWNEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
SHERIFF DARRIN VARNELL

Policy #	Related Policies: Missing Persons
<b>Silver Alert Plan</b>	
<p><i>This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.</i></p>	
<p>Applicable <a href="#">Oklahoma Statutes Oklahoma Statutes: §63-1-1990.5. Activation of silver alert procedure</a></p>	
<p>CALEA Standard:</p>	
<p><b>This policy is to be read in conjunction with The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office's missing persons policy and procedure.</b></p>	

- I. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and responsibilities regarding The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office's response to missing persons who are subject to the guidelines established under **Silver Alert**. **Silver Alert** is a component of a missing person investigation that uses a public notification system to broadcast information about missing impaired persons, including persons with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other mental disabilities in order to aid in their safe return.
- II. **Discussion:** The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office responds to various types of missing persons situations. Circumstances may include kidnappings, runaways, or people with diminished mental capacities that have wandered away from caregivers. Because there are various programs that aid us in locating missing persons who fall into these categories, there are different procedures to be followed.

Missing persons investigations present unique problems for law enforcement. The mere act of being missing is not a crime, yet it suggests the possibility that any number of major crimes may have been committed or that a person is in danger. Many innocent reasons may exist for a person's absence; indeed, most missing person cases involve no foul play. However, any circumstance that suggests a possible threat to human life mandates a timely investigative response from The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office.

The Silver Alert is an early warning system to alert the public when a person generally over the age of 60 is missing and believed to be in danger. While the Silver Alert has been specifically designed for persons over the age of 60, in rare instances where the victim is 60, but lacks the mental capacity of an adult, the Silver Alert may be authorized for activation.

### III. Policy:

- A. It is the policy of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons. Additionally, this Department/Office holds that every person reported as missing will be considered **at risk** until significant information to the contrary is confirmed.
- B. Jurisdictional conflicts are to be avoided when a person is reported missing or overdue. If a missing or overdue person either resides in, or was last seen in this jurisdiction, this department will immediately initiate the required reporting process. If a missing person legally resides in this jurisdiction and was last seen in another jurisdiction, but the law-enforcement agency covering that jurisdiction chooses not to take a missing-person report, this Department/Office will assume reporting and investigative responsibility.
- C. It shall be the policy of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing or overdue persons who are subject to the guidelines of the **Silver Alert** Plan. The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office holds that every adult with a developmental disability within the guidelines of the **Silver Alert**, reported as missing or overdue will be considered at risk until significant information to the contrary is confirmed. If it is determined the adult missing person will not be the subject of a **Silver Alert** The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office will continue to investigate the case as a missing person following the procedures outlined in The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office "Missing Persons" policy.
- D. It must be emphasized that there is no required waiting period for reporting a missing or overdue impaired person. A person may be declared "missing" or "overdue" when his or her whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable persons as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject's behavior patterns, plans, or routines.

### IV. Definitions:

- A. **Impaired Person** means a person who has a known or reported:
  - a. Developmental disability, including but not limited to autism, or traumatic brain injury and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the health or safety of the person.
  - b. Physical, mental or cognitive impairment or organic brain disorder, including but not limited to Alzheimer's disease, and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the health or safety of the person.

### V. Procedure:

- A. The following criteria shall be used for activation of a **Silver Alert**:
  - a. The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office shall confirm the individual is missing
  - b. The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office shall determine the individual is years 60 age or older and suffers from Alzheimer's disease, other forms of dementia or some other dementia-like cognitive impairment



**G. Communications personnel receiving the report of a missing person shall:**

- a. Determine if circumstances of the report meet the definition of a missing impaired person as defined in this policy.
- b. Dispatch, in a prompt manner, an deputy to the scene of the report.
- c. Notify a supervisor and an investigator.
- d. Transmit the appropriate radio alerts and other notifications.
- e. Search agency records for related information. Safeguard all pertinent records.

**H. Notification from outside agency regarding Silver Alert:**

- a. **A member of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office that receives the notification of a Silver Alert shall notify deputies to be on the lookout for the missing person.**

**I. The initial deputy or first responder assigned to the report of a missing impaired person shall:**

- a. Respond promptly to the scene of the report.
- b. Interview the person(s) who made the initial report.
- c. Obtain a description of the missing person. The collection of information about the missing person, including race, height, weight, hair and eye color, clothing, and other noteworthy features, should be done promptly and relayed to other deputies who may be assisting in the investigation. Recent photographs and/or videotape should be secured if available.
- d. Verify that the person is in fact missing. NOTE: In the case of impaired persons, first responders should never assume that searches conducted by distraught parents, adult children, guardians or others, have been performed in a thorough manner.
- e. Another check of the house and grounds shall be made that includes places where the impaired person could be trapped, asleep, or hiding. Special attention should be paid to enclosures like refrigerators, freezers, and the interior, including trunks of parked vehicles where limited breathing air may place the impaired person at even greater risk. A search of the home should be conducted even if the missing person was last seen elsewhere.
- f. Determine when, where, and by whom the missing person was last seen.
- g. Interview the individual(s) who last had contact with the missing person. Be alert to contradictions or evasiveness by the witness, especially if these statements cannot be readily substantiated.
- h. Identify the missing person's zone of safety for his or her age and physical and mental state.
- i. Make an initial determination of the type of incident. Note: Deputies must be cautious in "labeling" or classifying a missing-person case, since the classification process shall affect the way in which initial information or evidence is gathered. Even if first indications suggest a "less urgent" incident, deputies should consider all possibilities until the case category is clearly determined.

- j. Evaluate whether circumstances of the missing person's disappearance meet existing **Silver Alert** and/or other immediate community notification protocols. Discuss plan activation with the appropriate supervisory personnel on the decision to request implementation of a **Silver Alert**.
  - k. Determine the correct NCIC Missing Person File category and ensure that a notification is promptly transmitted.
  - l. Provide detailed descriptive information to the communications unit for broadcast updates.
  - m. Identify and interview everyone at the scene.
  - n. Conduct a thorough search of the scene. With the assistance of additional personnel, a systematic, thorough search of the incident scene should be conducted. If appropriate, deputies should obtain written permission to search houses, apartments, outbuildings, vehicles, and other property that might hold information about the person's disappearance. Deputies are again reminded to conduct a thorough, immediate search of the person's home and property — even if the disappearance supposedly took place elsewhere.
  - o. Secure and safeguard the area as a potential crime scene. If unusual circumstances exist, first responders must take control of the immediate area where the incident occurred and establish an appropriate perimeter to avoid destruction of vital evidence.
  - p. Prepare necessary reports and completing appropriate forms.
- J. The supervisor assigned to the report of a missing impaired person shall:**
- a. Obtain a briefing from the first responder(s) and other agency personnel at the scene.
  - b. Determine if additional personnel and resources are needed to assist in the investigation.
  - c. Consider activation of the **Silver Alert** system and/or other immediate community notification methods. If circumstances indicate the chances for the impaired person's safe recovery would be increased by immediate public awareness, a supervisor should promptly implement such efforts.
  - d. Establish a command post if needed.
  - e. Organize and coordinate search efforts.
  - f. Ensure that all required notifications have been made.
  - g. Establish a liaison with the victim family.
  - h. Confirm that all agency policies and procedures are observed.
  - i. Manage media relations. Many missing-person investigations, especially those involving large-scale search efforts, are likely to draw media attention. Supervisors should manage media presence in a way that complements, rather than conflicts with the investigation.
- K. The investigator assigned to the report of a missing impaired person shall:**
- a. Obtain a briefing from agency personnel at the scene.

- b. Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information.
  - c. Initiate a neighborhood investigation if appropriate. A thorough canvass of the neighborhood should be conducted without delay. The objective is to identify and interview all persons who may be able to provide information related to the incident. Obtain a brief history of recent family dynamics.
  - d. Explore the basis for conflicting information.
  - e. Implement effective case management.
  - f. Evaluate the need for additional resources and specialized services.
- L. An deputy assigned to the recovery or return of a missing impaired person shall:**
- a. Verify that the located person is, in fact, the reported missing person.
  - b. Notify the initial reporting person(s) of the well-being and, if permissible, the whereabouts and contact information of the person who has been located.
  - c. Provide necessary medical attention. In the case of a missing elderly person it is the policy of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office that medical personnel will be notified and will conduct a medical assessment of the found person.
  - d. Notify the **Silver Alert** contact person.
  - e. Secure, in the case of a missing or abducted person who has been located, intervention services, if indicated.
  - f. Complete the appropriate supplemental reports and cancel all outstanding notifications. Along with cancellation of the NCIC Missing Person File entry and other notifications regarding the case, a supplemental report should be completed that describes the person's activities while missing and circumstances of the recovery/return.
  - g. Contact Teletype (TTY), who will notify the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (OLETS).
  - h. Provide them with all known victim information for a statewide broadcast to the Department of Public Safety (DPS).
  - i. Ensure that the Silver Alert contains a description of the missing person and all known details.