


FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT  GENERAL ORDER	SUBJECT: MISSING PERSONS		NUMBER: 527
	EFFECTIVE DATE: September 22, 2022	REVIEW: September, 2025	
RESPONSIBLE ENTITY: MAJOR CRIMES BUREAU			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Directive <input type="checkbox"/> Replaces: <input type="checkbox"/> Revised:
ACCREDITATION STANDARDS	CALEA: 41.2.5, 41.2.6	VLEPSC:	

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines and procedures for all officers who respond to missing person incidents.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) to search for missing individuals who reside or were last known to be in Fairfax County whenever appropriate under the circumstances. Where resources exceed the capacities of a patrol response, the Major Crimes Bureau (MCB) may deploy both detectives and the Search and Rescue (SAR) Team as needed to assist with locating the missing individual. The Department shall also utilize social media to locate missing persons by providing relevant information, photos, and descriptions of missing individuals who are deemed to be endangered, disabled or missing under involuntary circumstances in furtherance of locating these individuals in a timely manner. There is no required waiting or time period for any missing individual (adult or child) to be reported to the Department as missing.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Critically Missing Adult: Any person eighteen (18) years of age and over who has been reported as missing that meets NCIC/VCIN classification criteria for Disability, Endangered, or Involuntary.
- B. Critically Missing Juvenile: Any person reported missing who is under the age of thirteen (13) **or** meets NCIC/VCIN classification criteria for Disability, Endangered, or Involuntary and is under eighteen (18) years of age.
- C. Emergency Alert Broadcast System: Programs administered by the Virginia State Police to aid in identification and location of critical missing persons. Commonly referred to as the “AMBER” and “Senior” alert systems.

- D. **Emergent Volunteer:** Individual who responds to a search area of contacts the Department to offer assistance in a specific ongoing search operations. Volunteer SAR groups who respond by request through the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) are not considered emergent volunteers.
- E. **Missing Adult:** Any person twenty-one (21) years of age or older who has been reported as missing.
- F. **Missing Child:** Any person under the age of twenty-one (21) years reported as missing per the [Code of Virginia](#).
- G. **Missing Juvenile:** Any person under the age of eighteen (18) reported as missing. Missing juvenile is a sub-category of missing children for reporting purposes.

IV. **GENERAL PROCEDURES**

- A. **Jurisdiction:** Missing adult and juvenile cases shall be investigated by the Department whenever:
 - 1. The missing individual resides in Fairfax County, even where their last known location is in another jurisdiction.
 - 2. The missing individual is suspected to be a victim of a criminal act that occurred or originated in Fairfax County.
 - 3. The missing individual is being sought by another law enforcement agency that requests FCPD assistance.
- B. **Missing Person Requirements:** Officers and supervisors shall consider the totality of the circumstances whenever classifying a missing person report.
 - 1. **Missing Juveniles:** Investigating officers shall ensure the Virginia Missing Children Information Clearinghouse Report ([SP-183](#)) is filled out with all known information at the time of the report and signed by a parent or legal guardian. Per the [Code of Virginia](#), a missing child shall be promptly entered into National Crime Information Center (NCIC)/VCIN immediately, and in all cases no more than two (2) hours after receipt of the report. Officers shall also ensure other local law enforcement agencies are alerted, and initiate an investigation in accordance with [FCPD General Order 605](#), Juvenile Procedures. Any supervisor may authorize entry of the child into NCIC/VCIN, and on-duty patrol supervisors shall promptly notify both the Duty Officer and Major Crimes Bureau (MCB) supervisor for all critically missing child cases.

2. **Missing Adults:** Officers who take initial reports shall ensure that the Virginia Missing Person Information Clearinghouse Report ([SP-67](#)) is filled out with all known information and a description of the missing person at the time of the report and signed by the complainant. Per the Code of Virginia, [missing senior adults](#) and [critically missing adults](#) shall be entered into NCIC/VCIN promptly and in all cases, no greater than two hours after receipt of the report. Any supervisor may authorize entry of a missing adult into NCIC/VCIN, and shall consult with both the acting Duty Officer and an MCB supervisor on all critically missing adult cases.
- C. **Special Considerations:** Where a missing individual is a known or suspected drug user, officers should give special consideration as to whether they should be classified as endangered given the totality of the known circumstances at the time of the report. Furthermore, individuals who are known to be involved or affiliated with criminal gangs should be investigated further by the assigned detective in coordination with the Gang Intelligence Unit.

V. MISSING JUVENILES

- A. Officers shall treat reports of runaway and missing juveniles as high priority and make all reasonable and diligent efforts to locate the juvenile. Officers should remind any involved party to a missing juvenile case perceived as reluctant to cooperate that the Department's priority is the safe return of the missing juvenile.
- B. **NCIC/VCIN Missing Children Classifications (Under 21 Years Old):** Officers shall use the following Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) categories to classify missing juveniles:
 1. **Disability:** The child has a proven mental or physical disability thus subjecting themselves or others to personal or immediate danger.
 2. **Endangered:** The child is missing under circumstances indicating their physical safety is in danger. Includes any child under the age of 13.
 3. **Involuntary:** The child is missing under circumstances that indicate the disappearance was not voluntary.
 4. **Juvenile:** The child is under eighteen (18) years of age, is missing, and does not meet entry criteria for Disability, Endangered, or Involuntary. This category does not apply to children under the age of 13.

5. **Missing:** The child is between the age of eighteen (18) and less than twenty-one (21) years of age, is missing, and does not meet criteria to be listed under Disability, Endangered, or Involuntary.

C. **Patrol Response:** The Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC) will update and provide information in a timely manner to officers who respond to a report of a missing child. This includes any information that would change classification criteria of the event. Responding officers shall make personal contact with complainants and either coordinate or personally conduct an initial search of the child's home, vehicles, immediate area, and last known location(s). Where the officer determines the child meets criteria to be listed as critically missing, they shall immediately notify a police dispatcher and request a supervisor to respond to the scene. All facts and circumstances surrounding a missing child case shall be documented in an incident report by the investigating officer in the current RMS.

D. **Juvenile Runaways:** Officers who discover evidence in a runaway juvenile's home environment indicating juvenile abuse or neglect shall necessitate immediate referral to the CPS hotline and consultation with MCB. Officers who discover conditions in the home, other than abuse or neglect, that would facilitate a juvenile chronically running away from the home may seek a petition from JDR Court without consent of the parent or guardian.

E. **Critically Missing Children:** Supervisors shall respond to the scene of all critically missing child cases to evaluate the facts and circumstances, coordinate a response effort, consult with MCB and SAR as needed (if the child is on foot), and update the acting Duty Officer.

1. Investigating officers shall, while on scene with the reporting party, ensure the child is entered into NCIC/VCIN, unless contact cannot be made with the Teletype Section. In those instances, the officer shall ensure the child is entered into NCIC/VCIN within two hours of receipt of the report. In all cases, officers must fax a copy of the [SP-183](#) to the Teletype Section and call to confirm receipt. Officers shall also obtain a photograph of the child whenever available, or indicate in their incident report why a photograph was not available. Local lookouts shall be broadcasted and notice sent to surrounding jurisdictions where it is believed that the child may have gone.

2. Leads that are developed during preliminary investigations may be followed-up on with approval from the patrol supervisor after consulting with MCB.

F. **Found Missing Children:** Per the [Code of Virginia](#), officers may take a child into immediate custody whenever the officer has probable cause to believe the child has (1) run away from home, (2) is without adult supervision during hours of the

night where there is clear and substantial danger to the child's welfare. Officers in these circumstances shall notify an intake officer via telephone that the child has been taken into custody. In accordance with the [Code of Virginia](#), the intake officer shall determine whether a petition is to be issued on the child's behalf. Where the intake officer determines a petition will **not** be issued, the officer shall either (1) return the child to their home, (2) release the child to a parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other individual standing in loco parentis, (3) place the child in shelter care for a period [not longer than 24 hours after the issuance of a detention order](#), or (4) release the child.

- G. **Documentation:** Incident reports created to document missing juveniles shall not include other event types in the same report. Complaints that involve multiple missing juveniles shall be captured in individual incident reports, cross referenced in each narrative, and assigned an individual case number. MCB shall conduct follow-up investigations on all missing juvenile cases unless the juvenile returns prior to MCB assignment. In these cases, juveniles should be removed from NCIC/VCIN if applicable, incident reports shall be closed as a Service, and the case shall be info-copied to MCB.
1. **Critically Missing Juveniles:** Cases involving critically missing juveniles shall be documented in incident reports as "**SERVICE-MISSING JUVENILE**" and held active for further investigation by MCB.
 2. **Missing Juveniles Under Voluntary Conditions:** Cases involving missing juveniles under voluntary conditions shall be documented in an incident report as "**SERVICE-MISSING JUVENILE.**" The juvenile is listed as "Involved-Other" and the report is held active for further investigation by MCB.
 3. **Missing Juveniles Between the Ages of 18 and 21:** Cases involving missing juveniles between 18 and 21 years of age shall be documented in an incident report as "**SERVICE-MISSING ADULT**" and held active for further investigation by MCB.

VI. MISSING ADULTS

- A. **NCIC/VCIN Missing Adult Classifications (21 Years of Age and Older):** Officers shall use the following VCIN categories to classify missing adults:
1. **Disability:** The adult has a proven mental or physical disability thus subjecting themselves or others to personal or immediate danger.
 2. **Endangered:** The adult is missing under circumstances indicating their physical safety is in danger.

3. **Involuntary:** The adult is missing under circumstances that indicate the disappearance was not voluntary.
 4. **Catastrophe:** The adult is missing after a catastrophic event.
 5. **Other:** Adult 21 years of age or older, not meeting entry criteria for any other category, who is missing and there is reasonable concern for their safety.
- B. **Patrol Response:** DPSC will update and provide information in a timely manner to officers who respond to a report of a missing adult. This includes any information that would change classification criteria of the event. All facts and circumstances surrounding a missing adult case shall be documented in an incident report by the investigating officer in the current RMS.
- C. **Critically Missing Adults:** Where the responding officer determines the adult meets criteria to be listed as critically missing, they shall immediately notify a police dispatcher and request a supervisor who shall respond to the scene to coordinate a response effort, consult with MCB and SAR as needed (if the adult is on foot), and update the acting Duty Officer.
1. Investigating officers shall, while on scene with the reporting party, ensure the adult is entered into NCIC/VCIN, unless contact cannot be made with the Teletype Section. In those instances, the officer shall ensure the adult is entered into NCIC/VCIN within two hours of receipt of the report. In all cases, officers must fax a copy of the [SP-67](#) to the Teletype Section and call to confirm receipt. Officers shall also obtain a photograph of the adult whenever available, or indicate in their incident report why a photograph was not available. Local lookouts shall be broadcasted and notice sent to surrounding jurisdictions where it is believed that the adult may have gone.
 2. Leads developed during the preliminary investigation should be followed-up on with approval from the patrol supervisor after consulting with MCB.
- D. **Documentation:** MCB shall be responsible for follow-up investigations for all missing adult cases where the individual is missing under suspicious circumstances or meets the requirements for VCIN classifications of endangered or disability. Cases involving missing adults shall be documented as follows:
1. **Critically Missing Adult:** Cases involving a critically missing adult shall be documented in an incident report as “**SERVICE-MISSING ADULT**” and held active for further investigation by MCB. Where the adult is located and removed prior to MCB arrival, the report shall be closed as a Service and info-copied to MCB.

2. **Missing Adult Under Voluntary Conditions:** Cases involving a missing adult under voluntary conditions shall be documented in an incident report as “**SERVICE-MISSING ADULT.**” The incident report shall be closed as a Service and info-copied to MCB for informational purposes only.

VII. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- A. **Public Affairs Bureau:** Media releases and social media posts regarding missing persons shall be coordinated through MCB and PAB. Responding MCB detectives shall notify PAB for all critically missing juvenile cases or as directed by a commander. PAB shall coordinate sharing this information with MCB, media outlets, and the general public. Once the missing individual is located, PAB shall be promptly notified.
- B. **Police Bloodhounds:** Any supervisor may request the assistance of a Police Bloodhound unit through the Duty Officer for assistance in locating a missing individual. Requesting supervisors should be prepared to provide the following information to the responding bloodhound handler or Canine supervisor:
 1. Age, health, mental capacity, clothing, and history of the missing individual.
 2. Length of time the individual has been missing and weather conditions.
 3. Last known location and availability of a scent article.
 4. Means of transportation, and all current efforts made to locate the person.
 5. If suicidal, the individual’s known access to weapons.
- C. **Search and Rescue Team:** A SAR supervisor or commander **shall** be notified for all critically missing individual cases whenever the individual is believed to be on foot and patrol units have been searching in excess of one hour. Where circumstances dictate an immediate response, the Duty Officer or patrol supervisor may consult with a SAR supervisor prior to the one hour time requirement. Risk factors to consider include time of day, weather, terrain, possible gang involvement, health of the juvenile, medical conditions, drug use, needed medication, and suicidal ideations or expressions.
- D. **Safety Officer:** The on scene commander, through coordination with the PLC and on-call Safety Officer shall determine whether a Safety Officer response is needed to ensure overall scene safety, risk identification and mitigation, and investigation of any employee injuries directly correlated to the incident.
- E. **Unmanned Aircraft System:** Per the [Code of Virginia](#), and in compliance with the Fairfax County [UAS Public Safety Program Manual](#), unmanned aircraft

systems may be deployed without a warrant when an America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) alert is activated or where its use is necessary to alleviate immediate danger to any individual.

VIII. EMERGENCY ALERT BROADCASTS

A. Officers should consider use of the EAB system accordingly where a missing individual meets the following criteria:

1. **AMBER Alert:** Where it is determined a juvenile has been abducted, their safety is at risk, and the abductor and/or child are likely to be within the Washington D.C. Metropolitan area, an AMBER Alert may be authorized via a MCB Commander in coordination with the Virginia State Police (VSP) after consultation with the Duty Officer and assigned MCB detective. Local and/or regional AMBER Alerts are made at the discretion of local/regional law enforcement agencies. [Activation of statewide AMBER Alerts are at the discretion of the VSP](#) only after the following criterion are met:
 - a. The abducted juvenile must be seventeen (17) years of age or younger, or currently enrolled in a secondary school within the Commonwealth of Virginia regardless of age, and there is reason to believe the child has been unwillingly taken from their environment without the permission of their parent or legal guardian.
 - b. The missing child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death.
 - c. The investigation verifies an abduction occurred and
 - d. Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the juvenile, suspect, and/or the suspect's vehicle.
 - e. The juvenile has been entered into NCIC/VCIN as a missing juvenile.
2. **Senior Alert:** Where it is determined that a senior adult's safety is at risk, a request can be made for the Virginia Senior Alert Plan to be activated. Senior alerts are coordinated through VSP by an assigned MCB detective after consultation with the Duty Officer and an MCB commander. Local and/or regional Senior alerts are made at the discretion of local/regional law enforcement agencies. [Activation of the Senior Alert Plan is at the discretion of the VSP](#) only after the following criterion is met:
 - a. This missing senior adult is over the age of sixty (60) and their whereabouts are unknown.

- b. The missing senior adult suffers from a cognitive impairment to the extent they are unable to care for themselves without the assistance of a caregiver, including a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or dementia.
 - c. The adult's disappearance poses a credible threat to the health and safety of the adult and under other circumstances deemed appropriate by VSP.
 - d. The investigation verifies the senior adult is missing and alternatives explanations have been ruled out by a thorough search of the area (if vehicular travel is not available to the adult).
 - e. Sufficient information regarding the missing senior adult exists for public dissemination that could assist in locating them or their vehicle.
 - f. The missing senior adult has been entered into the NCIC/VCIN missing person files; information has been reported to the Virginia Missing Person Information Clearinghouse in the prescribed format accompanied by a photograph of the missing senior adult.
3. **Critically Missing Adult Alert:** Where it is determined an adult is missing involuntarily and their safety is at risk, a request can be made for the Virginia Critically Missing Adult Alert ("Ashanti Alert") to be activated. These alerts are coordinated through VSP by an assigned MCB detective after consultation with the Duty Officer and an MCB commander. Local and/or regional alerts are made at the discretion of local/regional law enforcement agencies. [Activation of the Critically Missing Adult alert is at the discretion of the VSP](#) only after the following criterion is met:
- a. The missing adult's whereabouts are unknown.
 - b. The adult's disappearance poses credible risk to their health and safety and under circumstances deemed appropriate by VSP.
 - c. The investigation verifies the adult is critically missing.
 - d. Sufficient information regarding the missing senior adult is available for public dissemination that could assist in locating the critically missing adult or their vehicle.
 - e. The adult has been entered into NCIC/VCIN missing person file and a photograph of the adult has been provided to the Virginia Missing Person Information Clearinghouse.

4. **Missing Person With Autism Alert:** Where it is determined an individual (regardless of age) is missing who has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and their disappearance poses a credible threat, a request can be made for the Virginia Missing Person With Autism Alert Plan to be activated. These alerts are coordinated through VSP by an assigned MCB detective after consultation with the Duty Officer and an MCB commander. Local and/or regional alerts are made at the discretion of local/regional law enforcement agencies. [Activation of the Missing Person with Autism alert is at the discretion of the VSP](#) only after the following criterion is met:
 - a. The missing individual has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder as defined in the [Code of Virginia](#).
 - b. The individual is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death.
 - c. Sufficient information exists for public dissemination that could assist in locating the individual.
 - d. The individual has been entered into NCIC/VCIN missing person file.

IX. EMERGENT VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES

- A. Members of the public may assist the Department as emergent volunteers in search efforts for missing person cases. All emergent volunteers shall be properly screened to ensure they do not inadvertently or purposefully hinder or disturb the search area or become lost or injured themselves. Emergent volunteers may be used at the discretion of the SAR Commander or their designee, in consultation with the lead MCB detective and/or MCB commander, when deemed safe for them to participate.
- B. Emergent volunteers shall report to the established command post or other designated location, complete an Emergent Volunteer Screening Form and sign a Liability Waiver Form. Emergent volunteers shall provide photo identification and be appropriately attired for the search. At the direction of the SAR commander, the volunteer's identify shall be confirmed, NCIC/VCIN checks shall be conducted, and the volunteer shall briefly interview with the lead detective or their designee. Fire and Rescue Department personnel may also perform brief medical screenings of any emergent volunteer. Once cleared, the volunteer will be photographed and assigned through SAR command to assist the search appropriately.

C. Emergent volunteers may only supplement SAR operations and shall never work alone. Performed activities will be at the direction of a SAR member or their designee as determined by the SAR commander. All emergent volunteers shall be required to wear high visibility vests supplied by the Department at all times when engaged in search operations.

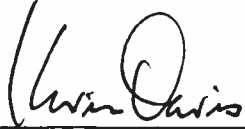
X. LEGAL REFERENCES

- A. [14 CFR Part 107](#), Operation of UAS within the United States
- B. [Fairfax County Government Program Manual Unmanned Aircraft System \(UAS\)](#).
- C. [Va. Code Ann. § 15.2-1718](#): Receipt of missing child reports.
- D. [Va. Code Ann. § 15.2-1718.1](#): Receipt of missing senior adult reports.
- E. [Va. Code Ann. § 15.2-1718.2](#): Receipt of critically missing adult reports.
- F. [Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-246](#): When and how child may be taken into immediate custody.
- G. [Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-247](#): Duties of person taking child into custody.
- H. [Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-255](#): Limitation on issuance of detention orders for juveniles; appearance by juvenile.
- I. [Va. Code Ann. § 19.2-60.1](#): Use of unmanned aircraft systems by public bodies; search warrant required.
- J. [Va. Code Ann. § 38.2-3418.17](#): Coverage for autism spectrum disorder.
- K. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-32](#): Definitions.
- L. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.2](#): Establishment of the Virginia Amber Alert Program.
- M. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.3](#): Activation of Amber Alert Program upon an incident of child abduction.
- N. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.5](#): Establishment of the Virginia Senior Alert Program.
- O. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.6](#): Activation of Senior Alert Program upon an incident of a missing senior adult.
- P. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.10](#): Definitions.

- Q. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.11](#): Establishment of the Virginia Critically Missing Adult Alert Program.
- R. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.12](#): Activation of Critically Missing Adult Alert Program upon an incident of a critically missing adult.
- S. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.13](#): Definitions.
- T. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.14](#): Establishment of the Virginia Missing Person with Autism Alert Program.
- U. [Va. Code Ann. § 52-34.15](#): Activation of Virginia Missing Person with Autism Alert Program upon incident of a missing child with autism.

General Order 527 becomes effective on the above date and rescinds all previous rules and regulations pertaining to the subject.

ISSUED BY:



Chief of Police

APPROVED BY:



County Executive