

NATI NEWSWIRE

SENIOR SAFETY ISSUES

IF SOMEONE GOES MISSING, NEIGHBORS' PHONES RING

Savage is the first metro-area community to use automated calling to notify neighborhoods when a child or vulnerable person has disappeared.

By [JIM ADAMS](#), Star Tribune

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If a child or vulnerable adult goes missing in Savage, phones throughout that neighborhood will start ringing to alert residents and ask them to check their property. If all goes well, the person will be found and brought home safely.

The city this month became the first in the seven-county metro area and the 21st agency in Minnesota to use A Child Is Missing, a nonprofit service based in Florida. The automated calling service has helped safely recover 315 missing children, college students and disabled or elderly (often with Alzheimer's disease) people since opening in 1997, said executive director Sherry Friedlander.

"All we need to do is make one phone call," said Savage Police Capt. David Muelken.

While police search and knock on doors, the Florida service can be making up to 1,000 calls a minute to local residents and businesses. Residents hear a recorded message describing the missing person and asking the recipient to look around their property and call local police if they find the missing person.

"It frees up a lot of manpower," Muelken said.

Nationally, about 2,200 agencies, including police in Miami, Atlanta, Sacramento and Seattle, are using A Child Is Missing, which issued more than 2,000 alerts last year, Friedlander said. For many states, the service fills a public notification gap for cases that don't qualify for the national Amber Alert system, officials said.

The service has been used twice in its first year in Minnesota to help find missing children in Hibbing, officials said.

"I think the system is a good one, it works fairly well," said Hibbing police investigator Gail Klarich. "You are able to use the eyes and ears of everybody in the surrounding area."

Hibbing's first case occurred shortly after the service started in April when a 9-year-old girl wandered into the woods from her foster home one afternoon, Klarich said. The alert calls went out and numerous volunteers helped look for her. She sneaked back home and was found hiding

in the garage about two hours later, Klarich said. The other case involved a father who returned his child to the mother three hours later than expected.

Some Hibbing residents wondered if the calling service was legitimate, Klarich said, and some were miffed that they did not get a follow-up call when the kids were found. "That's the problem; people don't get called back," she said. "We try to announce it through the local media and get word out to people that a child has been found." She said police also have set up a tape-recorded message that callers can hear to verify that A Child Is Missing is on the level.

Friedlander said the organization, which operates 24 hours a day, can't afford to make the follow-up calls because it is funded solely by grants and donations. She said an alert involves an average of 1,500 calls, but that the number could reach 10,000 in a densely populated area. She said the service, which has 14 full-time and 20 part-time employees, operates in all 50 states and has issued about 10,000 alerts in the past seven years.

Beyond Amber Alert

In Minnesota, Amber Alerts are aired for non-family abductions of children under age 18. The state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) issues such alerts only if local police have information the public could use to find the kidnapped child, whom police believe is in "imminent danger." The information is broadcast by the media and electronic billboards as well as being faxed or e-mailed to all state police agencies and others.

Minnesota is one of a few states to have a second-tier, crime alert network that can issue alerts for non-Amber missing people, said Janell Rasmussen, head of the BCA network. She said Minnesota is the only state where local police can send out statewide alerts, not only about missing persons, but about any serious crime to all police and almost 10,000 businesses, hospitals, schools and residents registered with the crime alert system. Alerts can be faxed or e-mailed to any or all of 53 categories of businesses or other groups.

The BCA is exploring whether to include A Child Is Missing alerts in its crime alert network or to leave it to local agencies to sign up for the service, said BCA Superintendent Tim O'Malley. He noted that whatever agency initiates a Minnesota crime alert also sends a follow-up message when the alert issue is resolved.

A Child Is Missing offers more targeted calling -- which a small town may need -- than do state crime alerts, he said, adding:

"I think it is a great concept."

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The Federal Trade Commission's website www.consumer.gov/idtheft or <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/> on identity theft should be the first place anyone who is a victim of identity theft goes to learn what steps they should take to reduce their risk of revictimization and information about their rights as a consumer.

They have a hotline number to advise victims of identity theft about steps to take to protect their financial information. There is also a new complaint form that can be completed and printed so it is available as part of a police report when victims contact their local police departments. It can also be used to help verify information when dealing with creditors and credit bureaus.

The Federal Trade Commission has very useful information on a variety of fraud crimes, as well as the availability of bulk mailing of brochures that agencies can request free for use with victims

Website of the Month

HHS Strategic Plan FY 2007-2012

The U.S. Administration on Aging is pleased to inform you of the publication of the *HHS Strategic Plan FY 2007-2012*.

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Service's priorities and activities for the next five years, and highlights the significant role the U.S. Administration on Aging is playing within the department to improve the health and well-being of older people and their family caregivers.

For more details and a copy of the plan visit: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hhsplan/2007/>.

NC LAUNCHES SILVER ALERT PROGRAM

Crime Control and Public Safety Secretary Bryan Beatty today launched North Carolina's new Silver Alert program to help locate adults with dementia or other cognitive impairment who go missing. "It is imperative that we do all we can to quickly locate these adults who are especially vulnerable," said Beatty. "The Silver Alert program is designed to increase public awareness to help us find those missing adults who may have wandered off or become confused."

Based on the Cognitive Impairment Assistance Law passed earlier this year, the Silver Alert program builds upon the success of the state's AMBER Alert system by using various resources to rapidly notify the public about the missing endangered adult. Just as with AMBER Alert, the Silver Alert program is a collaborative effort between radio, television and internet news broadcasters, local police and sheriff's departments, the N.C. Department of Transportation and the N.C. Center for Missing Persons. Information about the missing person will be posted on electronic highway message signs and broadcast by participating news agencies.

In addition, about 1,000 calls per minute will be made to nearby residents and business using an automated system. The Center for Missing Persons activates a Silver Alert at the request of the local law enforcement agency, once they have determined that all necessary criteria have been met. Criteria include:

the person is 18 years or older

the person is believed to be suffering from dementia or other cognitive impairment

the person is believed to be missing (regardless of circumstance)

a legal custodian of the missing person (which can be a caregiver) has filed a missing person's report with the local law enforcement agency, and

the local law enforcement agency has investigated and notified the Center.

Beatty emphasized that specific health information about the missing person – other than they may suffer from a cognitive impairment – would not be released to protect the missing from harm and abide by health privacy laws. Department officials anticipate as many as 25 to 30 Silver Alerts may be issued monthly to various locations across the state based on recent call volumes to the N.C. Center for Missing Persons. Most of the alerts are expected to be issued locally.

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More Senior Safety related articles are located at www.nationaltriad.org; e-news section

Don't Toss That Old Cell Phone!

Posted by: laurakujawski

The National Association of Triads, Inc. (NATI) announced that they are seeking cell phone retailers to collect cell phones to benefit their emergency cell phone program. Through their partnership with the 911 Cell Phone Bank, NATI provides cell phone retailers a no cost cell phone recycling program.

Over 11 million cell phones are retired each month in the US and most can easily make it to your local waste stream. In support of new state recycling laws, communities nationwide are banning their disposal in local landfills. Many of these laws are aimed directly at cell phone retailers. Recently, New York Governor George Pataki signed legislation that will require every cell phone retailer in New York to accept up to 10 used cell phones from any person during normal business hours. The retailers would then be responsible for recycling, or disposing of them in an environmentally sound manner. A similar law went into effect in the State of California in July of this year.

The 911 Cell Phone Bank program is a free, convenient and easy recycling solution. Retail partners simply collect cell phones in the boxes provided and mail them in using postage paid shipping labels. Boxes are shipped via the USPS so there is no need for a UPS or FedEx account, simply hand the box to the postman. Each participating retail store also gets a Compliance Kit which includes in store signage, a Certificate of Participation and a quarterly environmental report.

"This is a great opportunity for retailers to comply with any recycling legislation and give back to the community" said James Mosieur, a Director at the 911 Cell Phone Bank

The 911 Cell Phone Bank program provides emergency cell phones and funds to law enforcement and victim services agencies nationwide. Cell phones recycled under this program will benefit the National Association of Triads, NSA's national senior safety program and participating local law enforcement agencies. "The 911 Cell Phone Bank has been a great partner" said Ed Hutchison, Director of NATI. "Having this resource available let's law enforcement focus on serving the community."

The 911 Cell Phone Bank has contracted with RMS Communications Group to act as its exclusive processor. As a leading worldwide cell phone recycler, RMS has worked with retailers, manufacturers, charitable groups and environmental organizations to create innovative cell phone recycling programs with a focus on self sustainability.

For more information about cell phone recycling with the 911 Cell Phone Bank please visit their [web site](http://www.911cellphonebank.org/retailers.asp), www.911cellphonebank.org/retailers.asp.

AARP has a new web resource for ID Theft at http://www.aarp.org/learntech/personal_finance/id_entity_theft_intro.html. A recent AARP study indicates that seniors are less knowledgeable than others about tools to protect their financial identity and reduce their risk of victimization, while being very fearful of identity theft. The web site includes information that can be downloaded or printed as a resource for seniors (and others) to learn how to obtain a credit freeze (vs. the less safe credit alert that is normally placed on a victim's credit when a report of identity theft is made to the credit reporting bureaus.) It also has an online seminar for seniors to take on 'preventing' identity theft. AARP also has new resources including videos on investment fraud and other tools that may be helpful for victims of various financial crimes, including mortgage fraud.

The National Consumers League has a new website devoted to counterfeit check fraud at www.fakechecks.org. The US Postal Inspection Service is one of the partners in this great site to educate the public on the dangers of counterfeit checks, a huge problem in dealing with various mass marketing crimes, cyber crimes and work at home schemes among others.

For victim services providers who work with victims of mass marketing fraud, identity theft or computer related fraud schemes, please check out www.onguardonline.gov as well as the Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov. Both have useful tips to educate people on how to reduce their risks of these kinds of crime as well as the correct link/procedure for filing a complaint.

For those working with victims of mortgage fraud, there is a national hotline that works to help homeowners avoid foreclosure. It can also refer victims to local HUD approved housing counselors who are trained in working with victims of mortgage fraud and predatory lending, including rescue foreclosure schemes. Homeownership Preservation Foundation at <http://www.995hope.org/> or 1-888-995-HOPE.

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