

MISSING ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY SYSTEM

35.01 PURPOSE

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) shall establish and maintain the Missing Endangered Person Advisory (MEPA) System to assist in the recovery of missing persons who are at risk of harm or injury. This regulation establishes standard procedures and protocols necessary for the effective administration and utilization of the MEPA System.

35.02 OVERVIEW

The MEPA System is a method of alerting citizens and law enforcement agencies that a person who is at risk of harm or injury is missing. The system was developed to aid law enforcement in the dissemination of time-sensitive information to help locate and recover missing endangered persons. The MEPA System uses the administrative email component of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), non-EAS broadcast, to send information to public broadcasters and a regional law enforcement bulletin to police. The ultimate goal is to facilitate the quick and safe recovery of the missing endangered person.

35.03 DEFINITIONS

- A. Immediate Message: Immediate notification sent via email from the Department Watch Center (DWC) to affected recipients containing pertinent information relative to an incident.
- B. MEPA: MEPA is a missing person advisory notification that alerts citizens and law enforcement of a missing endangered person through established transmissions, broadcasts, and/or other forms of public communications. MEPA provides descriptive information about the missing endangered person to law enforcement and the public, with the goal of enlisting support in the search efforts and safe recovery of the missing endangered person. In order for the MEPA System to be activated, the subject of the advisory must be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database under the Disability, Endangered, or Involuntary categories. The incident must be an active investigation conducted by a law enforcement agency. The following criteria must also be met:

1. The incident does not meet the criteria for an Amber Alert, and;
2. The person is missing under unexplained, involuntary, or suspicious circumstances, or;
3. The person is believed to be in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, environmental or weather conditions, or is known to be in the company of a potentially dangerous person, or some other factor is present that puts the person in peril of serious bodily injury or death, and;
4. There is sufficient information that could assist in the safe recovery of the missing endangered person if it is distributed to the public.

NOTE: Additional factors are considered in decisions regarding MEPA System activation. These factors include, but are not limited to: availability of descriptive information that could assist in the recovery of the missing endangered person; time since the missing endangered person was last seen; and the reliability of witnesses.

- C. MEPA System: A comprehensive advisory system established and maintained by the PSP to assist in the recovery of missing endangered persons who are at risk of harm or injury. The MEPA System is comprised of the following components:
1. Educational and training forums designed to inform law enforcement agencies and the general public regarding the requirements for activation of the MEPA System.
 2. Partnership with law enforcement agencies responsible for the recovery of missing endangered persons.
 3. Liaison with public broadcasters to facilitate the distribution of a MEPA.
- D. MEPA System Designee: A member of a Troop Criminal Investigation Assessment Unit who has been designated by the MEPA System State Coordinator to share the authority to activate or deactivate the MEPA System.

- E. MEPA System Partner: A person or agency that supports the MEPA System in an ancillary role. A MEPA System Partner shall be so designated by the MEPA System State Coordinator.
- F. MEPA System Stakeholder: A person or agency that supports the MEPA System in a primary role. A primary role includes direct dissemination of alert information, law enforcement training, and education to the public at large.
- G. MEPA System State Coordinator: The Supervisor, Criminal Investigation Assessment/Missing Persons Unit, Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), shall be designated as the MEPA System State Coordinator.

35.04 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Director, Bureau of Criminal Investigation:
 - 1. Monitor, evaluate, and direct the MEPA System.
 - 2. Ensure the MEPA System State Coordinator provides training on the MEPA System to persons and/or agencies as appropriate, to ensure law enforcement and the general public are aware of the MEPA System and its availability.
- B. Director, Special Investigations Division:
 - 1. Administer the MEPA System.
 - 2. Ensure Troop Criminal Investigation Assessment Unit members assigned as MEPA System Designees receive training necessary to maintain proficiency in their responsibilities associated with the MEPA System.
- C. Supervisor, Criminal Investigation Assessment/Missing Persons Unit:
 - 1. Serve as the MEPA System State Coordinator.
 - 2. If necessary, make the final decision to activate or deactivate the MEPA System.
 - 3. Coordinate and conduct the implementation, utilization, monitoring, and maintenance of the MEPA System.

4. Coordinate and conduct training for law enforcement agencies on the utilization and activation of the MEPA System.
5. Coordinate and conduct educational forums for the general public on the utilization and activation of the MEPA System.
6. Coordinate and conduct MEPA System review meetings, as necessary.
7. Ensure all requests from law enforcement agencies for MEPA System activations are received and acted on in a timely manner.
8. Maintain a file of requests for MEPA System activations from law enforcement agencies.
9. Maintain liaison with the Department's Press Office and Public Information Office relative to the MEPA System.
10. Assign a MEPA System Designee as acting MEPA System State Coordinator in his/her absence.

D. Supervisor, Department Watch Center:

1. Assist the MEPA System State Coordinator with coordinating and conducting the implementation, utilization, and maintenance of the MEPA System.
2. Ensure all requests from law enforcement agencies for MEPA System activation are received and acted on in a timely manner.

E. Troop Criminal Investigation Assessment Unit members designated as MEPA System Designees:

1. Liaison with the DWC regarding MEPA System activation.
2. Perform specific MEPA System-related duties at the direction of the MEPA System State Coordinator, or designee.

3. Document requests for MEPA System activation by preparing and submitting an Assignment Report, Form SP 7-003, to the MEPA System State Coordinator, or designee, no later than the next business day following a request for MEPA System activation.
4. Attend MEPA System review meetings conducted by the MEPA System State Coordinator, or designee.
5. At the direction of the MEPA System State Coordinator, or designee, attend periodic meetings, training seminars, schools, conferences, etc., in order to maintain proficiency in their responsibilities associated with the MEPA System.

F. First Responding Police Officer:

1. Conduct in-depth interviews of the victim's family and any witnesses in order to establish whether the details surrounding the incident may meet the criteria for a MEPA System activation.
2. Consult with a Supervisor to determine if there is sufficient information to conclude that an activation of the MEPA System is warranted.

NOTE: The first responding police officer shall follow the procedures contained in FR 7-1, Criminal Investigations, and OM 7-2, Field Reporting, governing the investigation of missing persons/juveniles. The first responding police officer shall also continually reevaluate case information as it becomes available, and review it against the criteria for activation of the MEPA System to determine if the activation criteria are met.

3. If it appears the incident may meet the criteria for a MEPA System activation, immediately transmit, by radio or telephone, all information required for entering the victim into the NCIC database and the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network (CLEAN) to the appropriate Communications-Desk Unit personnel. Specifically instruct the affected Communications-Desk Unit personnel to request a MEPA System activation.
4. Continue to gather and transmit all relevant information to the Communications-Desk Unit, and be available to

provide clarification to the MEPA System State Coordinator or the MEPA System Designee, if needed.

G. Communications-Desk Unit Personnel:

1. Upon receipt of the missing endangered person information from the first responding police officer, provide the DWC the information via telephone. Immediately thereafter, enter the missing person information into NCIC and CLEAN as a MEPA System activation request.
2. Forward requests for information from the MEPA System State Coordinator or the MEPA System Designee to the first responding police officer.

H. Department Watch Center Personnel:

1. Upon receiving a request for a MEPA System activation, contact the MEPA System State Coordinator or the affected MEPA System Designee, as appropriate, by the most expedient means, to determine if a MEPA System activation is warranted.
2. Upon request from the MEPA System State Coordinator or the MEPA System Designee, transmit an Immediate Message concerning the missing endangered person.
3. Forward requests for information from the MEPA System State Coordinator or the MEPA System Designee to the first responding police officer.
4. Document the MEPA System activation request in accordance with standard operating procedures.

I. Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center: Upon notification and direction from the MEPA System State Coordinator or the affected MEPA System Designee, perform specific duties as they relate to the activation and deactivation of the MEPA System.

J. Director, Bureau of Training and Education:

1. Coordinate MEPA System training programs and curriculums for law enforcement personnel in cooperation with the Director, BCI.

2. Ensure all MEPA System training is conducted in accordance with the provisions of this regulation and with the approval of the Director, BCI.
- K. Director, Bureau of Information Technology: Ensure affected personnel under their command receive training from BCI on the MEPA System in furtherance of its established training programs and curriculums.

35.05 REPORTING MEPA SYSTEM ACTIVITY

- A. Request for MEPA System Activation:
1. A request for MEPA System activation shall be documented by the appropriate MEPA System Designee on an Assignment Report. The Assignment Report shall be submitted electronically via email to the MEPA System State Coordinator, or designee, who shall assign an incident number to the report and file/retain it electronically in accordance with applicable Department procedures.
 2. The request for MEPA System activation shall also be noted in the appropriate investigative report(s) by the investigating officer. The notation shall include the date and time the request was made, and shall indicate whether the request was approved or denied.
- B. Other Reporting: Special reporting may be required as specific needs are identified.