

**REMARKS OF**  
**THE HONORABLE DEBORAH J. DANIELS**  
**ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
**OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**  
**AT THE**  
**OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS'**  
**AMBER ALERT TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE**  
**ON**  
**TWEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2003**  
**MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE**

Good morning! I'm delighted to welcome you to this conference. And I'm pleased to see so many familiar faces from our first national AMBER conference in Dallas last August. Thank you for being here and for your continued commitment to building a coordinated, national response to child abductions through AMBER Alert.

Over the next two days, you'll have the opportunity to take stock of our collective accomplishments in implementing regional, state, and local AMBER plans since our August conference, where we need to go from here, what training and technical assistance can help you get there, and what technologies are available that can help us meet our goal of instituting a timely, seamless, nationwide network, among all jurisdictions, for protecting children through AMBER Alert.

We've made tremendous progress, in a very short time, toward reaching this goal. At last count, 93 jurisdictions throughout the country had AMBER Alert programs in place. This total includes 46 statewide programs and 16 regional efforts. Your efforts have resulted in the safe return of 113 abducted children, and it seems as though, almost every other day, we learn of another child who's been recovered with the help of an AMBER Alert.

In just the few months since our Dallas conference last August, 30 children have been recovered, another state has implemented a statewide AMBER plan, and yet another expects to be operational statewide by the end of this month. And I know this progress wouldn't have been possible without the dedicated efforts of all of you in this room.

Our goal for these next two days is to provide information that will help you take the next steps in developing and enhancing your AMBER Alert plans. We'll examine what we learned from the August conference and the recommendations that emerged from those discussions for what more can be done to foster AMBER Alert efforts at the regional, state, and local levels.

I hope you've all had a chance to review the report of the conference proceedings. If you haven't yet seen it, the report is posted on our AMBER Alert Web site at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov).

Tomorrow, we'll provide an update on the work we've been doing with the AMBER Advisory Board to further develop technical assistance and training to support your efforts. Our goal is to have training available in every state within the next year. And we'll work closely with all of you to coordinate this effort.

We'll also have the opportunity here in Memphis to learn about the array of commercial products and services that are available to support your AMBER programs. As you know, there's been considerable confusion about all these various technologies, as well as the extent to which you may or may not need them in order to accomplish your mission of quickly and safely recovering abducted children and returning them to their families.

So we hope to shed some light on this issue by bringing various vendors together and letting you see first-hand some of the products that are on the market.

But I also want to make sure that you all understand that the Justice Department is not endorsing any product or service highlighted at this conference. I understand that some vendors -- and I've actually seen some of their Web sites -- are suggesting, or inferring, that their products are endorsed by the Department of Justice for use in AMBER Alert programs.

This is absolutely not true. The Department of Justice has not tested any of these technologies or products, nor does it vouch for their efficacy or reliability for use in AMBER Alert programs. Rather, our role is simply to serve as an information broker. It's up to you to decide what, if any, product or technology may best support your individual AMBER efforts.

And, as I believe Chief Phil Keith of the Knoxville, Tennessee, Police Department will remind you, you should not assume that technology can substitute for a strong working relationship among law enforcement, broadcasters, and other key players -- both within your state and among all 50 states. Everyone must understand his role and be prepared to act immediately when the occasion arises.

That said, in an effort to provide some helpful guidance, we have developed some guidelines that can help you make decisions about the available technologies. And we've posted these guidelines on our OJP Web site, along with the XML data standards we've developed that can help ensure compatibility among systems in different states.

Later this morning, staff from our Bureau of Justice Assistance will tell you more about XML and how it can be used to support your AMBER Alert plans, and your interaction with other states.

As we work to refine the national AMBER Alert initiative, we'll also need to address a number of other challenges. For example, there's the problem of the rapid mobility of abductors and how to decide when and where to issue alerts.

We saw a great example of success just in the last two weeks, when police in Illinois asked their counterparts in California to issue an alert. They did so, and the child was promptly recovered.

There's also the problem of the sometimes slow reaction of parents who don't immediately realize the child is in danger, or who hesitate to call police for fear they'll raise a false alarm. And the other side of the coin, which can be indecision on the part of law enforcement, as precious minutes tick away; or a failure in communication between law enforcement and broadcasters. The issue of the decision-making process for law enforcement -- both when to issue an alert, and when -- and how -- to cancel it -- is a critical aspect of the process.

We must decide how best to address these issues, to make sure that AMBER Alert operates as

effectively and efficiently as possible whenever it's needed to aid in the safe recovery of an abducted child. You'll have a chance to discuss these challenges over the next two days.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to fully implement AMBER Alert, to save the lives of innocent children, and to spare families the terror of knowing that their child is in danger. I want to thank you for the tremendous progress you've already made. And I want to assure you that I'll do whatever I can to further your critical efforts.

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I now have the considerable honor of introducing a man who has become a symbol of hope and courage in the face of every parent's worst nightmare.

In the summer of 2002, Ed Smart and his family were sleeping peacefully in their Salt Lake City home when an itinerant worker he and his wife, Lois, had hired a few months earlier broke into his daughters' bedroom and abducted 14-year-old Elizabeth at gunpoint.

For 9 terrible months, until Elizabeth finally was returned safely to her family, Ed Smart remained confident that his daughter was alive. He was a tremendous source of strength for his wife and family, and a beacon of hope for other families of missing children. He also, as many of you know, became an ardent advocate for AMBER Alert. During the months Elizabeth was missing, Ed became a potent lobbying force, personally meeting with Members of Congress and urging them to pass an AMBER bill.

And just last April, Ed stood in the White House Rose Garden with his wife Lois and daughter Elizabeth at his side, as President Bush signed the PROTECT Act, which included the AMBER Alert provisions. Since then, he's continued to raise awareness of the issue of missing children and to promote nationwide expansion of the AMBER Alert child safety network.

We're very pleased that both Ed and Lois Smart could be here with us today. Unlike most of us, who are here because of the work we do, Ed and Lois are here because of the terrible ordeal their family went through. Thank you both for using your family's painful personal experience to help protect other innocent children and their families from the nightmare of child abduction. Everyone, please join me in welcoming Ed Smart to the podium, and honoring both Ed and Lois for their tremendous courage and faith.