



COURTESY OF THE HAGERMAN FAMILY

# AMBER'S LEGACY

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Thirty years ago, a young girl disappeared not far from her home in Arlington, Texas. Her tragic story would result in a nationwide network of missing child alert systems that would be named for her.

JAN 13, 1996

Nine-year-old Amber Hagerman is riding her bike with her brother near her home in Arlington, Texas. She decides to ride over to the parking lot of a nearby abandoned grocery store where other kids had set up a ramp. Her brother returns home.

Minutes later, a kidnapper throws Amber into his pickup and drives away. A neighbor hears Amber's screams, calls police and provides officers with a description of the suspect and the vehicle.

Teams of law enforcement officers comb the area with no results.

JAN. 17, 1996

A man walking his dog finds Amber's nude body, face down in a drainage ditch 4 miles from her home. Her throat had been cut. At first, her parents refuse to accept the police reports, telling reporters camped outside their home that she's still alive. But that's not the case.

Amber's killer is never found.

JAN. 27, 1996

An Arlington local radio listener, Diane Simone, writes a letter to KDMX-FM suggesting the Emergency Alert System be used to get the word out on child abductions, the same way severe weather alerts are spread.

This starts the ball rolling for the creation of what would come to be called America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response - the Amber Alert.



1996

**March 28**

Texas Rep. Martin Frost introduces the Amber Hagerman Child Protection Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill, aimed at strengthening penalties for sexual abuse of a child, languishes in committee but is tacked on as an amendment to a defense appropriation bill in 1997.

**October**

The Dallas/Fort Worth Association of Radio Managers teams up with law enforcement agencies in northern Texas to conduct a trial run of the new Amber Alert system.

1997

**July 5**

The Amber Alert system is activated for the first time. The child is later found drowned in a creek.



Rae Leigh Bradbury in 2002

**Nov. 10**

Eight-week-old Rae Leigh Bradbury is abducted from her Arlington, Texas, apartment by her babysitter. The next day, officials issue an Amber Alert. Within 90 minutes, a motorist spots the kidnapper's vehicle on Interstate 20. Rae Leigh becomes the first child to be recovered via an Amber Alert.

2000

**Oct. 24**

The U.S. House of Representatives passes House Resolution 605, urging communities around the nation to adopt the Amber plan.

2002

**February**

The Federal Communications Commission endorses the Amber system.

**Aug. 1**

Two children are abducted at gunpoint in Lancaster, California. They are recovered after an animal control officer reports a vehicle matching the description in the Amber Alert.

**Aug. 12**

Texas Gov. Rick Perry establishes the Texas Amber Alert Network. By the next month, 26 states have established Amber Alert systems.

**Oct. 1**

America Online begins allowing users to sign up to receive Amber Alerts via computer, cell phone or pager. The system works via ZIP code.

**Dec. 2**

The first Amber Alert system in Canada is established in Alberta.

2003

**April 10**

Congress passes the PROTECT Act, which strengthens the ability of law enforcement officials to deal with violent crimes against children. One of its provisions: Support, coordination and standardization of the statewide Amber systems. President George W. Bush signs the bill into law on April 30.

**Aug. 3**

The nation's first Amber training conference is held in Dallas.

2005

**Feb. 17**

Hawaii becomes the 50th state to establish an Amber alert plan.

**May 11**

The Dept. of Justice and the wireless industry establish a system in which users can receive geo-graphically oriented Amber alerts on their mobile devices.

2006

**May 25**

The U.S. Postal Service issues an Amber Alert postage stamp.

**May 25**

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Department of Justice and the Wireless Foundation team up with the Ad Council for a public service media campaign to encourage the public to sign up to receive Amber Alerts.



LIFETIME

**Sept. 4**

A made-for-TV movie, "Amber's Story" — starring Elizabeth Röhm — is broadcast on Lifetime.

**THE IMPACT OF AMBER ALERTS**

Since its inception, the Amber system has seen failed attempts, hoaxes and at least one internet hacking incident. Children have been saved, however, thanks to Amber Alerts.

## AMBER ALERTS ISSUED

2004	196
2005	275
2006	261
2007	227
2008	194
2009	207
2010	173
2011	158
2012	167
2013	194
2014	186
2015	182
2016	179
2017	195
2018	161
2019	145
2020	200
2021	254
2022	181
2023	185
2024	189

## NUMBER OF CHILDREN INVOLVED

2004	243	338
2005		
2006	316	
2007	278	
2008	256	
2009	263	
2010	211	
2011	197	
2012	204	
2013	243	
2014	239	
2015	224	
2016	231	
2017	263	
2018	203	
2019	180	
2020	260	
2021		320
2022	227	
2023	229	
2024	236	

## SUCCESSFUL RECOVERIES AS A DIRECT RESULT OF AMBER ALERT

2006	53
2007	48
2008	40
2009	45
2010	28
2011	28
2012	52
2013	41
2014	72
2015	58
2016	54
2017	53
2018	34
2019	29
2020	70
2021	58
2022	22
2023	67
2024	68