

MISSOURI ALERT NETWORKSM

Ten Key Facts about the Missouri Alert Network

On August 28, 2007, Missouri's Governor and Dr. Carter D. Ward, Executive Director, Missouri School Boards' Association, announced the Missouri Alert NetworkSM, hereafter called Network. The Network is an innovative, collaborative initiative and partnership of the State of Missouri and the Missouri School Boards' Association intended to enhance the safety and security of Missouri's school children, grades kindergarten through twelve, and higher education institution, and others.

1. What is the Missouri Alert Network?

The Missouri Alert Network is a state-level, rapid notification and information distribution system so that in the event of an emergency or such other unusual circumstance that impacts the safety and security of school children and persons who work in schools, grades kindergarten through twelve, there will be (at least) one contact in each school district to receive an appropriate voice, text, and/or email message from the State of Missouri *within minutes* of the message being sent. The message can be distributed to designated persons in school districts throughout *all* of Missouri or to designated persons in school districts in regions of the state—as determined by particular circumstances. In fact, messages can be sent to designated persons in school districts in particular Missouri counties or “Highway Patrol regions.”

2. When was the Missouri Alert Network launched? Is the Network tested on a regular basis?

The Missouri Alert Network was formally announced on August 28, 2007 at the *First Annual Conference on Coordinated School and College Safety and Security* in Branson. In September 2007, the Missouri School Boards' Association commenced promoting the Network to kindergarten through grade twelve schools and building the appropriate data base. The Network became operational in October 2007. Promotion of the Network to school districts is on-going.

The Missouri School Boards' Association has a rich history in the provision of information and services for safe and secure schools. The concept for the Network originated in confidential discussions that first took place in February 2007 between representatives of the State of Missouri, the Missouri Department of Public Safety and Office of Homeland Security, and the Missouri School Boards' Association. In April 2007, the Missouri Department of Public Safety and the Missouri School Boards' Association executed a Memorandum of

Understanding that outlined the elements of the Network. It should be emphasized that talks toward establishing the Missouri Alert Network began prior to April 16, 2007—the day of the campus shooting that took place at Virginia Polytechnic University in Blacksburg, Virginia.

The Missouri Alert Network is tested at 10:00 a.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. The first Missouri Alert Network test took place on October 10, 2007.

3. Was there not a similar network already in place in Missouri or a mechanism for quickly contacting school districts in Missouri?

No. Prior to the Missouri Alert Network, there was not a means in place for state-level public safety officials to simultaneously communicate to all school districts in Missouri, or to school districts in a particular region in the state, *within minutes* with a voice, text, and/or email message.

4. Who makes the decision to activate the Network, if necessary, and send an emergency alert to school districts?

Officially, a decision to activate the Network is made by the Governor or the Governor’s designee. (The decision is not made by the Missouri School Boards’ Association.) The day-to-day control and management of the Network is vested with the Missouri Department of Public Safety/Missouri Information Analysis Center (MIAC). As such, activation and test protocols of the Network are determined by the Missouri Department of Public Safety. The Missouri School Boards’ Association has responsibility for promoting awareness and distributing information about the Network to schools and others and maintaining the data base for the Network.

5. Is there a cost to the State of Missouri for the Network?

No, there is not a cost to the State of Missouri for the Network. As already mentioned, the Network is an innovative, collaborative initiative and partnership of the State of Missouri and the Missouri School Boards’ Association.

6. Can all schools in Missouri, public *and* nonpublic, participate in the Network? Is it mandatory that schools participate in the Network?

Participation in the Network is open to all kindergarten through grade twelve schools in Missouri—public *and* nonpublic—except “home schools.” As previously indicated, in the event of an emergency or such other unusual circumstance that impacts the safety and security of school children and persons who work in kindergarten through grade twelve schools, the Network is intended to provide an appropriate voice, text, and/or email message from the State of Missouri to (at least) *one* contact in a school district. For nonpublic schools, the

voice, text, and/or email message would be directed to an individual with “district level authority.”

7. Is there a cost to schools to participate in the Network?

There is no cost to schools to have *one* contact in a district to receive an appropriate voice, text, and/or email messages from the Network. For school districts to have more than *one* contact, a fee charge applies. The Missouri School Boards’ Association has the responsibility for the collection of fee payments for additional contacts requested by school districts.

8. Is the technology solution for the Network provided by the State of Missouri or the Missouri School Boards’ Association?

The responsibility for the provision of a technology solution for the Network rests with the Missouri School Boards’ Association. The Missouri School Boards’ Association has made contractual arrangements with a company in the private sector for the technology solution—GroupCast, LLC of St. Louis. GroupCast provides (local) alert notification services for several schools in Missouri and other states under its brand name SchoolReach.

9. Can entities besides kindergarten through grade twelve schools be a part of the Network?

Yes. On December 20, 2007, the Missouri Department of Public Safety and the Missouri School Boards’ Association executed a supplement to the Memorandum of Understanding that formally establishes the Missouri Alert Network. The supplement extends the Missouri Alert Network to Missouri’s higher education institutions. Extension of the Missouri Alert Network to Missouri’s higher education community embraces the spirit and recommendations contained in the report of the *Missouri Campus Security Task Force* that was provided to Missouri’s Governor on August 21, 2007.

10. Who is the point-of-contact for the Missouri Alert Network at the Missouri School Boards’ Association for inquiries or questions?

For questions about the Missouri Alert Network, contact should be made to: Brent Ghan, Chief Communications Officer, 573.445.9920 x 376 (voice), ghan@msbanet.org (Internet).

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