

Monday February 15, 2010 10:39 AM EST

We are now using the A Child is Missing system. See full message for sign up info.

We are now participating with the A Child is Missing (ACIM) system. Don't let the name confuse you, the system doesn't only work for children but can also be used for elderly people with dementia or disabled people who become missing. ACIM has a database of millions of phone numbers and can call up to 1,000 numbers per minute. Once we see that there is a need for the system, we simply make a phone call and provide them with the information. They have specialists on hand who will use maps and satellite imagery to assist us in determining a search area. They will then call all of the phones within that area and play a recorded message with a description of the person and a number to call with information.

We hope that getting this information to people in the area in the most expedient manner will enable us to quickly locate missing people. This does not take the place of Amber Alert for abducted children, but is rather a means of localizing the initial spread of information. There are some pretty strict guidelines for issuing an Amber Alert and we can use ACIM even if the Amber Alert criteria are not met. This may provide us with further information so that an Amber Alert can be issued.

We are working on future programs that will give us even more help in locating the missing. Recent articles in the Lancaster News demonstrate how difficult investigating these cases can be. Our intent is to make every effort in locating missing people in the initial stages of the investigation as it grows more difficult by the minute.

Here's what citizens can do to help. The numbers in the database are basically retrieved from landline telephone listings. We recognize that many people currently use cell phones, VOIP phones, or have unlisted numbers. We need for those people to make sure that they are part of the database by going to <http://www.achildissing.org/sign.asp> and adding their information. It is essential that we be able to reach the maximum number of people possible with this information. These calls will normally not be made at night, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

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