Kidnapping Emergencies

Kidnapping emergencies require telecommunicators to quickly recognize the nature of the incident, determine the caller's relationship to the event, gather critical information, and provide responders with information that may help locate and safely recover the victim. This course familiarizes telecommunicators with kidnapping calls, including the differences between kidnapping and missing-person incidents, information-gathering techniques for first- and second-party callers, preservation of evidence, and the purpose and use of AMBER Alerts.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Discuss the differences between a kidnapping and a missing-person incident.
2. Identify questions that can help expedite an appropriate emergency response to a kidnapping.
3. Explain how the caller party affects the way a kidnapping call is handled.
4. Gather relevant information about victims, suspects, vehicles, weapons, incident locations, and circumstances.
5. Explain the role of an AMBER Alert in kidnapping cases.

Module 1: Kidnapping vs. Missing Person

This module introduces the differences between a kidnapping and a missing-person report. Learners examine indicators that suggest a person has been taken against their will, circumstances that may increase concern in missing-person cases, ransom notes, custodial interference, and words callers may use to describe an abduction. Learners also review realistic scenarios to determine whether incidents should be treated as kidnappings or missing-person cases.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Define kidnapping and distinguish it from a missing-person incident.
2. Identify circumstances that may increase the urgency of a missing-person report.
3. Recognize statements and indicators that suggest a kidnapping has occurred.
4. Explain how ransom notes and custodial disputes may indicate a kidnapping.
5. Classify example incidents as kidnapping or missing-person reports based on the information provided.

Content/Activities

- Kidnapping vs. missing-person characteristics
- Kidnapping indicators and terminology
- Ransom notes and custodial disputes
- 911 call example and transcript review
- Classification activity and knowledge check

Module 2: Test Your Knowledge – Kidnapping vs. Missing Person

This module reinforces the concepts introduced in Module 1 through scenario-based knowledge checks. Learners evaluate caller statements and incident descriptions to determine whether the circumstances indicate a kidnapping or a missing-person report.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Apply kidnapping and missing-person definitions to realistic caller statements.
2. Identify ransom notes as evidence that may indicate kidnapping.
3. Recognize witnessed abductions as kidnapping incidents.
4. Identify custodial interference situations that may constitute kidnapping.
5. Use available incident details to select the appropriate call classification.

Content/Activities

- Six scenario-based knowledge-check questions
- Ransom-note scenario
- Missing child scenario
- Witnessed abduction scenario
- Custodial interference scenario
- Suspicious-vehicle kidnapping scenario
- Parent-child custody kidnapping scenario

Module 3: First Party Callers

This module focuses on callers who are themselves victims of kidnapping or false imprisonment. Learners examine recent and in-progress kidnappings, prolonged false imprisonment, location determination, information gathering, victim safety, and factors that affect whether a victim should remain in place or attempt to leave.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify a first-party caller in a kidnapping incident.
2. Determine whether a kidnapping is in progress, recently occurred, or involves prolonged false imprisonment.
3. Gather information about the victim's current location and the original kidnapping location.
4. Ask questions that clarify the victim's current circumstances, confinement, and immediate danger.
5. Prioritize victim safety when determining whether the caller should remain in place or attempt to leave.

Content/Activities

- Recent and in-progress kidnappings
- False-imprisonment situations
- Location, captor, and weapon information
- Random versus known-abductor questions
- Confinement factors such as locked cars, trunks, buildings, restraints, doors, and windows
- Captor location and proximity
- Video: Managing First Party Kidnapping Calls
- Review of location, kidnapper, and weapons information

Module 4: Second Party Callers

This module addresses callers who witness a kidnapping, suspect that a kidnapping has occurred, or are with a victim who has escaped or been found. Learners practice gathering detailed information about incident locations, victims, suspects, vehicles, weapons, timing, custodial interference, ransom notes, and evidence.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify the characteristics of a second-party kidnapping caller.
2. Gather accurate information about the victim's location and the location of the incident.
3. Obtain useful descriptions of victims, suspects, vehicles, and weapons.
4. Identify circumstances involving parental kidnapping or custodial interference.
5. Explain how to preserve evidence, including ransom notes and other items handled by an abductor.

Content/Activities

- Second-party caller definition and examples
- Victim and incident locations
- Addresses, landmarks, and physical locations
- Custodial interference and parental kidnapping
- Incident timing and dispatch priority considerations
- Victim name, age, address, clothing, distinguishing features, and parent information
- Suspect name, age, address, motive, restraining orders, and physical description
- Vehicle and weapon descriptions
- Ransom-note handling and information gathering

Module 5: First or Second Party Caller?

This module gives learners practice determining whether a caller is a kidnapping victim or someone reporting the kidnapping of another person. Correctly determining caller party helps the telecommunicator select appropriate questions and gather the most useful information for responders.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Distinguish first-party callers from second-party callers.
2. Recognize statements indicating the caller is the kidnapping victim.
3. Recognize statements indicating the caller witnessed or discovered a kidnapping.
4. Classify callers who are with an escaped or recovered victim.
5. Use caller-party information to determine the appropriate information-gathering approach.

Content/Activities

- First-party caller classification activity
- Second-party caller classification activity
- Drag-and-drop caller statements
- In-progress kidnapping examples
- False-imprisonment examples
- Witnessed-abduction examples
- Escaped-victim examples
- Custodial interference examples

Module 6: America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) Alerts

This module introduces the AMBER Alert system and its role in rapidly distributing information about recent child abductions. Learners review the history and purpose of the system and examine the ways AMBER Alerts are communicated to the public through the Emergency Alert System.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Define the purpose of an AMBER Alert.
2. Explain how AMBER Alerts support efforts to locate abducted children.
3. Describe the origins of the AMBER Alert system.
4. Identify common methods used to broadcast AMBER Alerts to the public.
5. Explain why rapidly communicating accurate child-abduction information is important.

Content/Activities

- Definition and purpose of AMBER Alerts
- History of the AMBER Alert system
- Amber Hagerman and the origin of the program
- Emergency Alert System
- Television broadcasts
- Radio broadcasts
- Variable message traffic signs
- Review of public alert methods

Module 7: Your Role in AMBER Alerts

This module connects the telecommunicator's information-gathering responsibilities to the AMBER Alert process. Learners consider how accurate, timely information gathered during a kidnapping call can assist law enforcement and support the rapid dissemination of information when an AMBER Alert is appropriate.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the telecommunicator's role in gathering information related to a possible AMBER Alert.
2. Identify victim, suspect, and vehicle information that may assist responding agencies.
3. Explain the importance of obtaining accurate and timely information during a child-abduction call.
4. Communicate relevant information to responders in support of the emergency response.
5. Recognize how thorough call handling contributes to efforts to locate an abducted child.

Content/Activities

- Telecommunicator responsibilities during child-abduction calls
- Victim information
- Suspect information
- Vehicle information
- Incident location and direction of travel
- Information-sharing with responders
- AMBER Alert response considerations

Module 8: Test Your Knowledge – AMBER Alerts

This module reinforces key concepts concerning AMBER Alerts and the telecommunicator's role in kidnapping cases. Learners apply information from the previous modules to knowledge-check scenarios involving child abductions, information gathering, and emergency response.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Apply AMBER Alert concepts to child-abduction scenarios.
2. Identify information that may be critical during an abducted-child investigation.
3. Recognize the telecommunicator's information-gathering responsibilities.
4. Determine which details should be communicated promptly to responders.
5. Demonstrate understanding of the relationship between kidnapping-call handling and AMBER Alerts.

Content/Activities

- AMBER Alert knowledge checks
- Child-abduction scenarios
- Victim and suspect information review
- Vehicle and location information review
- Telecommunicator-role questions

Conclusion

This module reviews the major principles presented throughout the course. Learners consolidate their understanding of kidnapping identification, caller-party determination, information gathering, victim and responder safety, evidence preservation, and AMBER Alerts.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Summarize the key differences between kidnapping and missing-person incidents.
2. Identify the essential information to gather during a kidnapping call.

3. Explain how first- and second-party kidnapping calls require different questioning approaches.
4. Describe the importance of victim safety, responder situational awareness, and evidence preservation.
5. Explain how telecommunicators contribute to the response to child abductions and AMBER Alerts.

Content/Activities

- Review of kidnapping versus missing-person incidents
- Review of first- and second-party callers
- Review of victim, suspect, vehicle, weapon, and location information
- Review of evidence-preservation practices
- Review of AMBER Alerts and telecommunicator responsibilities
- Course conclusion

Course Completion Criteria

To successfully complete this course and earn a certificate and continuing education hours, learners must achieve a minimum score of 75%. The quiz must be completed within 30 minutes.

- CE hours awarded: 1
- Certificate duration: 12 Months

Technical Requirements

- Desktop, laptop, or mobile device
- Speakers or headphones
- High-speed Internet access
- A current web browser)