WEST VIRGINIA CODE CHAPTER 15 ARTICLE 3F

WV Legislature

§15-3F-1. Short Title.

This article shall be known and may be cited as the “Purple Alert Plan”.

WV Legislature

§15-3F-2. Findings and declarations relative to "Purple Alert Plan".

(a) The Legislature finds that:

(1) Public alerts can be one of the most effective tools in locating a missing person who has a cognitive impairment;

(2) Law-enforcement officers and other professionals, specializing in the field of missing persons, agree that the most critical moments in the search for a missing person are the first few hours immediately following the discovery that the individual is missing, asserting that if he or she is not found within 24 hours, it is unlikely that he or she will be found alive or without serious injury. The rapid dissemination of information, including a description of the missing cognitively impaired person, details of how he or she became missing, and of any vehicle involved, to the citizens of the affected community and region is, therefore, critical;

(3) Alerted to the situation, the citizenry become an extensive network of eyes and ears serving to assist law enforcement in quickly locating and safely recovering a missing person who has a cognitive impairment;

(4) The most effective method of immediately notifying the public of a missing person who has a cognitive impairment is through the broadcast media: and

(5) All forms of developing technologies are required to assist law enforcement in rapidly responding to these alerts and are an additional tool for assuring the well-being and safety of our cognitively impaired citizenry. Thus, the use of traffic video recording and monitoring devices for the purpose of surveillance of a suspect vehicle adds yet another set of eyes to assist law enforcement and aid in the safe recovery of the cognitively impaired person.

(b) The Legislature declares that given the successes other states and regions have experienced in using broadcast media alerts to quickly locate and safely recover missing persons, and, with the recent development of highway video recording and monitoring systems, it is altogether fitting and proper, and within the public interest, to establish these programs for West Virginia.

WV Legislature

§15-3F-3. Definition of Cognitive Impairment.

For the purposes of this article, “cognitive impairment” means a substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs judgement, behavior, or the ability to live independently or provide self-care, and includes but is not limited to:

(1) Alzheimer’s disease or other related dementias;

(2) An intellectual or developmental disability;

(3) A brain injury; or

(4) Another mental disability not related to substance abuse.

WV Legislature

§15-3F-4. Establishment of “Purple Alert” program.

(a) The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security shall establish a "Purple Alert" program authorizing the broadcast media, upon notice from the State Police, to broadcast an alert to inform the public of a missing person who has a cognitive impairment;

(b) The Secretary shall notify the broadcast media serving the State of West Virginia of the establishment of the "Purple Alert" program and invite their voluntary participation.

(c) The Secretary shall develop a plan for implementation no later than July 1, 2025. The plan shall include "Purple Alert" activation protocols, evaluation of first responder training requirements and needs as related to a cognitively impaired person, coordination and use of established programs, and analysis of any costs. The Secretary shall also make recommendations for any additional legislation or actions necessary to further facilitate the implementation of the "Purple Alert" program.

WV Legislature

§15-3F-5. Activation of Purple Alert.

The following criteria shall be met before the State Police activate the Purple Alert:

(1) The person is believed to have a cognitive impairment;

(2) The person is believed to be missing, regardless of circumstance;

(3) An individual who has knowledge that the person is missing has submitted a missing person's report to the State Police or other appropriate law-enforcement agency;

(4) The missing person may be in danger of death or serious bodily injury;

(5) The missing person is domiciled or believed to be located in the State of West Virginia;

(6) The missing person is, or is believed to be, at a location that cannot be determined by an individual familiar with the missing person, and the missing person is incapable of returning to his or her residence without assistance;

(7) There is sufficient information available to indicate that a Purple Alert would assist in locating the missing person; and

(8) The missing cognitively impaired person does not qualify for a Silver Alert or a Missing Endangered Child Alert.

WV Legislature

§15-3F-6. Notice to participating media; broadcast of alert.

(a) To participate, the media may agree, upon notice from the State Police via email or facsimile, to transmit information to the public about a missing cognitively impaired person that has occurred within their broadcast service region.

(b) The alerts shall include a description of the missing person, any known details of the circumstances surrounding the person becoming missing, and any other information as the State Police may consider pertinent and appropriate. The State Police shall in a timely manner update the broadcast media with new information when appropriate concerning the missing cognitively impaired person.

(c) The alerts also shall provide information concerning how those members of the public who have information relating to the missing cognitively impaired person may contact the State Police or other appropriate law-enforcement agency.

(d) Concurrent with the notice provided to the broadcast media, the State Police shall also notify the Department of Transportation, the Division of Highways, and the West Virginia Turnpike Commission of the "Purple Alert" so that the department and the affected authorities may, if possible, through the use of their variable message signs, inform the motoring public that a "Purple Alert" is in progress. The department and the affected authorities may provide information relating to the missing cognitively impaired person and information on how motorists may report any information they have to the State Police or other appropriate law-enforcement agency.

(e) The alerts shall terminate upon notice from the State Police.

(f) The Secretary shall develop and undertake a campaign to inform law-enforcement agencies about the "Purple Alert" program established under this article.

WV Legislature

§15-3F-7. Immunity from civil or criminal liability.

A person or entity who in good faith follows and abides by the provisions of this article is not liable for any civil or criminal penalty as the result of any act or omission in the furtherance thereof, unless it is alleged and proven that the information disclosed was false and disclosed with the knowledge that the information was false.

WV Legislature