

Dept. of Justice: Silver Alert helps prevent possible tragedy

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MADISON, Wis. – Yesterday, a tragedy was prevented after a Good Samaritan responded quickly to a Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Silver Alert issued during evening rush hour for an 81 year-old Janesville man reported missing by family.

On Thursday, November 16, 2017, an 81 year-old Janesville man left his residence just before 9 a.m. in a silver 2016 Subaru Outback to go to breakfast, but never arrived. The man was reported missing by family later in the day, and local law enforcement's investigative efforts found that the man had been in Rockford, Ill. around noon.

Given the close proximity of Rockford to the Wisconsin border, and the time that had passed since the man was known to have been in Rockford, DOJ issued a statewide Silver Alert just after 5 p.m. on Thursday at the request of the Janesville Police Department.

Four hours later, an alert citizen in DeForest, Wis, located about 50 miles north of Janesville, spotted the vehicle which matched the vehicle described in the Silver Alert that appeared on the Wisconsin Department of Transportation dynamic messaging signs, and called law enforcement. There was also a call about a wrong way driver matching the vehicle description. As a result of the calls from concerned citizens, the man was found safe in DeForest.

“DOJ’s partnership with the DOT, the assistance from alert citizens, and local law enforcement’s response, all helped prevent a tragedy for this missing man, his family, and others on the road,” said Attorney General Brad Schimel.

Since the Silver Alert program was implemented in August 2014, 215 alerts have been issued. This is the second, known success story where DOT dynamic messaging signs played a role in safely locating a missing person believed to have dementia or some other cognitive impairment. The Wisconsin Lottery has also been a key partner in the Silver Alert program’s success by displaying Silver Alerts on lottery display terminals throughout Wisconsin to both clerks and customers. There are multiple Silver Alert success stories have resulted from alerts being displayed on lottery terminals.

The Silver Alert program, made possible after the enactment of 2013 Wisconsin Act 264, notifies the public when an adult with Alzheimer’s, dementia, or other permanent cognitive impairment is missing. The program is administered by the DOJ Division of Criminal Investigation. Silver Alerts are issued when the following criteria are met:

- The missing person is 60 years of age or older;
- The missing person is believed to have Alzheimer’s, dementia, or another permanent cognitive impairment that poses a threat to the individual’s health and safety;
- There is reasonable belief that the missing person’s disappearance is due to the individual’s impaired cognitive condition;
- The Silver Alert request is made within 72 hours of the individual’s disappearance;
- There is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the missing person.

Individuals can sign up to receive Silver Alerts at www.wisconsincrimealert.gov.