

## 19-001 Project Lifesaver

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Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department  
**FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE**

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### PROJECT LIFESAVER

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this Field Operations Directive is to establish uniform procedures for the handling of calls when searching for missing persons who are equipped with a "Project Lifesaver" transmitter.

#### BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has developed the "Bring Our Loved Ones Home" Task Force (BOLOH), now called "LA Found," which is comprised of various members of public and private agencies; including Department personnel, who are focused on developing the following objectives:

- To keep track of those at-risk for "wandering" or going missing, including children and adults with Alzheimer's disease, Dementia, Autism, and other cognitive disorders; and
- In the shortest time possible, locate and return those individuals safely when they wander away from their families and caregivers.

The LA Found task force proposed multiple strategies for achieving their objectives, and one which the Board of Supervisors has chosen to move forward with, is the Project Lifesaver pilot program.

Project Lifesaver is a 501(C)(3) community based, public safety, non-profit organization that provides law enforcement, fire/rescue, and caregivers with a program and products designed to quickly locate individuals with cognitive disorders who are prone to the life threatening behavior of wandering.

As part of the Project Lifesaver pilot program, the Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services (WDACS) has provided over 130 wristband-style transmitters to families across the County who have a verified need to protect loved ones with Alzheimer's disease, Dementia, Autism, mental illness, or other disabilities that may lead to wandering.

The Project Lifesaver pilot project is in effect county wide and across multiple jurisdictions. Through existing mutual aid agreements, police agencies within the County of Los Angeles may call upon the Department to assist with searching in any local jurisdiction for a missing person equipped with a Project Lifesaver wristband (transmitter).

The Project Lifesaver transmitter operates by producing an intermitted radio frequency (RF) signal in the range of 216-218 MHz, which is unheard by the wearer. Similar to LoJack® devices in stolen cars, the RF

signal can penetrate through most walls, roofs, and building materials with a range of approximately one-half mile for ground units searching in suburban environments and even further in open areas where there are fewer obstructions. Aero Bureau airships equipped with Project Lifesaver receivers can detect the signal from one (1) to five (5) miles away, depending on similar environmental factors.

The Mental Evaluation Team (MET), the Communications and Fleet Management Bureau (CFMB), and Aero Bureau have been provided in-depth training and achieved certification to operate Project Lifesaver equipment. Two Department airships, MET units, and a CFMB Mobile Communications Unit (MCU) are now equipped with Project Lifesaver RF receivers and ground antennas.

Station units have not been outfitted with RF receivers or ground antennas; however, it is important for all Department members working in a patrol or dispatch position to be aware of what actions are required should a call of a missing person equipped with a Project Lifesaver transmitter be received.

## **PROCEDURE - MISSING PERSONS**

Regardless of whether a person reported missing is a Project Lifesaver participant, Department personnel shall follow existing Department policy and procedures pertaining to missing persons, as ordered in the following Manual of Policy and Procedure (MPP) section(s):

- 5-09/120.03 MISSING PERSONS
- 5-09/120.04 MISSING PERSON CHECKOFF FORMS
- 5-09/120.05 MISSING CHILDREN
- 5-09/120.50 MISSING ADULTS

### **Desk Personnel Responsibility**

Upon receiving a telephone call involving any missing person, desk personnel shall ask the caller whether the missing person was wearing a Project Lifesaver transmitter or any other type of locator device.

If the missing person is a Project Lifesaver participant, desk personnel shall take the following steps:

- Gather pertinent information regarding the missing person, such as name, age, physical description, clothing worn, mental/physical condition, whether the missing person requires critical medications, last time/location seen, possible mode and direction of travel, and/or possible destination;
- Obtain the frequency number of the missing person's transmitter from the informant, if known;
- Dispatch units to the location to begin a missing persons investigation;
- Notify the MET triage desk at [REDACTED TEXT] for MET response;
- Document the MET triage desk notification in the call remarks, i.e., "MET triage desk is 914N"; and
- Station desk personnel shall update the MET triage desk as further details are ascertained.

**Note:** Station desk personnel should not wait for station units to arrive on scene before calling the MET triage desk for Project Lifesaver search team support. Immediately after receiving a missing person call, when the missing person is wearing a Project Lifesaver wristband, desk personnel shall notify the MET triage desk to allow a search team the ability to move expeditiously in joining responding station units.

In most cases, the responding MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units will be dispatched by the MET triage desk to respond "Code-3" to the location. Therefore, it is imperative if at any time the missing person is located, an update shall be provided by station desk personnel to the MET triage desk, so that all MET/Project Lifesaver search units responding "Code-3," and Aero Bureau airship(s) can be canceled.

**The MET triage desk can be reached, at ([REDACTED TEXT], 24 hours a day, and seven days a week. The reporting party shall not be directed to call the MET triage desk. The MET triage desk telephone number is a resource exclusively intended for law enforcement personnel use only.**

#### Station Field Unit Responsibility

The station field unit(s) assigned the handle on the missing person/critical missing call will retain the lead role in handling and conducting all search operations and possible subsequent investigation. MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units and associated technical equipment are resources to help support patrol operations. At no time are the responding MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units to assume the exclusive or lead role in the search for the missing person or subsequent investigation.

The handling station field unit (or designee) shall do the following:

- Establish a command post, request a tactical frequency, and notify assisting station field units, as well as the MET triage desk of the location of the command post and proper tactical radio frequency; and
- Brief the MET/Project Lifesaver team leader with the missing person's details and co-partner with the Met/Project Lifesaver team leader in formulating a search plan when utilizing Project Lifesaver equipment.

While Project Lifesaver equipment is being utilized during a missing person search, station field units may partner (in same vehicle or otherwise) with MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units since station units are most familiar with the local jurisdiction. Additionally, when station field units are requested to assist Aero Bureau or MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units in locating a missing person who has been tracked into the station's jurisdiction from a **neighboring agencies' jurisdiction**, all Department policy and procedures regarding missing persons/children, safe driving tactics, and the mentally ill shall be adhered to.

At the conclusion of the incident, a debriefing shall be conducted with involved station field units and the MET/Project Lifesaver ground search team.

#### MET Team Responsibility

During these incidents, the MET personnel shall be responsible for the following:

- The MET triage desk shall dispatch specially trained on-duty and/or on-call Project Lifesaver ground search personnel with RF receivers to the location and participate with station field units in locating the missing person. The ranking team member or the MET triage desk watch deputy will advise MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units whether their response will be "Code 3." Responding MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units shall notify the requesting station and the Sheriff's Communication Center (SCC) when responding "Code-3";
- The on-duty MET watch commander or first available MET supervisor responding shall assume the role of the MET/Project Lifesaver ground search team leader;

- Upon arrival, the MET/Project Lifesaver ground search team leader shall report to the command post and immediately deploy arriving MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units in a systematic manner, ensuring proper communications between MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units and station field units to triangulate and help determine the position of the missing person;
- If station field units or station desk personnel have not requested an airship, the MET triage desk shall request a response by Aero Bureau via SCC and relay all information regarding the missing person, including the missing person was wearing a Project Lifesaver wristband. The MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units and station field units shall be notified of whether or not Aero Bureau is responding and their ETA, if known;
- Additional resources may be needed in addition to the command post to aid in the search; such as a radio interoperability MCU. This need shall be determined by the first MET/Project Lifesaver ground search unit responding to the incident and relayed to the MET team leader;
- At the conclusion of the search, the MET/Project Lifesaver team leader will notify the MET triage desk of the outcome;
- The MET/Project Lifesaver ground search team leader shall ensure all MET/Project Lifesaver ground search units participate in a debriefing with station field units involved in the search. The success and/or challenges of the technology will be included in the discussion; and
- The MET triage desk shall make the necessary notifications of the incident details to the MET/Project Lifesaver team lieutenant and the Department Operations Center (DOC).

#### CFMB Responsibility

The ranking CFMB team member responding shall assume the role of lead technical expert for the ground search team with regard to communications and logistical issues.

#### Aero Bureau Responsibility

Upon notification, and weather permitting, the first available airship shall respond and assist the ground search team and station field units, utilizing airborne Project Lifesaver equipment.

### **PROCEDURE - FOUND PERSONS**

Regardless of whether a found person is a Project Lifesaver participant, Department personnel shall follow existing Department policy and procedures pertaining to found persons and returning or locating a missing adult/child, as ordered in the following MPP section(s):

- 4-16/020.00 MISSING OR FOUND PERSONS
- 5-09/120.55 RETURNING OR LOCATING A MISSING ADULT

#### Desk Personnel Responsibility

Project Lifesaver wristbands have a label affixed to the band which reads, "I am lost, call 9-1-1." Upon receiving a telephone call involving any found person, desk personnel shall ask the caller whether the missing person was wearing a Project Lifesaver transmitter or any other type of locator device.

If the found person is a Project Lifesaver participant, desk personnel shall take the following steps:

- Gather all possible pertinent information regarding the found person, such as name, approximate age, physical description, clothing worn, mental/physical condition; and
- Dispatch station field units to the location of the found person.

### Station Field Unit Responsibility

The responding station field unit(s) shall perform the following:

- Evaluate the found person's condition and request fire personnel respond to the location for further evaluation if he/she has visible injuries, appears to be in distress, or states that he/she is in need of medication and/or medical attention;
- Gather any necessary identifiable information (name, birthdate, address, caretaker's name, and phone number) from the found person;
- If the found person is unable to provide any identifying information and it is safe to do so, remove the wristband from the missing person;
- Once the wristband is off the found person, utilize a Leatherman tool or equivalent tool to unscrew the backing of the transmitter cap. With the cap off, remove the battery and this will expose the wristband's unique frequency number, (i.e.,218.000);

**Note:** If unable to remove the cap of the wristband without damaging it, call the MET triage desk to dispatch a unit to the location who will use a plastic "key" to open the wristband.

- Call the MET triage desk, at (626) 258-3000, and provide the transmitter's frequency number, along with any identifiable information to the MET deputy. The Project Lifesaver Database will be queried for the found person's information; and
- The found person's information will be provided to the station field deputy to assist in locating the missing person's caregiver/family and return him/her home safely.

## **INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

For information or questions regarding Project Lifesaver search procedures, contact the MET watch commander, at [REDACTED TEXT], or the MET Triage Desk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at [REDACTED TEXT].

For information about enrollment of participants in the program, please refer the public to the "LA Found" program coordinators:

LA Found Hotline: 1-833-569-7651

Email Address: LAFound@WDACS.LACOUNTY.GOV

For Information about the Alzheimer's Safe Return Program and Medic Alert bracelets, refer to Alzheimer's website and Newsletter #106 (links located in references below).

If you have any questions regarding the information contained in this Field Operations Directive, please contact Field Operations Support Services, at [REDACTED TEXT].

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Missing Person Report (SH-R-12)

Found Person Report (SH-R-12C)

## **AFFECTED POLICIES/DIRECTIVES**

**MPP** section 5-09/120.00 Missing Persons - (Definitions)

MPP section 5-09/120.03 Missing Persons

MPP section 5-09/120.04 Missing Person Checkoff Forms

MPP section 5-09/120.05 Missing Children

MPP section 5-09/120.50 Missing Adults

MPP section 5-09/120.55 Returning or Locating a Missing Adult

Field Operations Directive 16-003, Calls For Service Involving Mentally Ill Persons

## **REFERENCES**

California Penal Code, section 13519.07: [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=13519.07.&lawCode=PEN](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=13519.07.&lawCode=PEN)

MPP section 4-16/010.00 Mentally Ill Persons (Case Assignment Manual)

MPP section 4-16/020.00 Missing or Found Persons (Case Assignment Manual)

Newsletter 01-10, Missing Children Reporting

Requirements:[http://intranet/intranet/sites/Rmb/FOSS/newsletters/2001/01-10%20Missing%20Children%20Reporting%20Requirements%20\(Revised%20040312\).pdf](http://intranet/intranet/sites/Rmb/FOSS/newsletters/2001/01-10%20Missing%20Children%20Reporting%20Requirements%20(Revised%20040312).pdf)

Project Lifesaver website: <https://projectlifesaver.org/>

Project lifesaver Database: <https://www.plsdatabase.org/agencies/index.php>

Medic Alert and Safe Return Program website: <https://alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/medicalert-safe-return>

