

Assembly Bill No. 535

CHAPTER 328

An act to amend Section 8594 of the Government Code, relating to the Emergency Alert System.

[Approved by Governor September 23, 2013. Filed with
Secretary of State September 23, 2013.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 535, Quirk. Emergency Alert System.

Existing law requires law enforcement agencies that are informed of the abduction of a child 17 years of age or younger, or an individual with a proven mental or physical disability, and determine the victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death, and that there is information available that, if disseminated to the general public, could assist with the safe recovery of the victim, to request, absent extenuating investigative needs, activation of the Emergency Alert System within the appropriate local area.

This bill would require a law enforcement agency to request, absent extenuating investigative needs, activation of the system when the law enforcement agency receives a report that an abduction has occurred or that a child has been taken by anyone, including a custodial parent or guardian, and makes the above-described determinations. By increasing the duties of local officials, this bill would create a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 8594 of the Government Code is amended to read:
8594. (a) If a law enforcement agency receives a report that an abduction has occurred or that a child has been taken by anyone, including, but not limited to, a custodial parent or guardian, and the agency determines that a child 17 years of age or younger, or an individual with a proven mental or physical disability, has been abducted or taken and the victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death, and there is information available that, if disseminated to the general public, could assist in the safe recovery of the victim, the agency, through a person authorized to activate the

Emergency Alert System, shall, absent extenuating investigative needs, request activation of the Emergency Alert System within the appropriate local area. A law enforcement agency shall only request activation of the Emergency Alert System pursuant to this subdivision if these requirements are met. The Emergency Alert System is not intended to be used for abductions resulting from custody disputes that are not reasonably believed to endanger the life or physical health of a child.

The California Highway Patrol, if requested by a law enforcement agency, shall activate the system.

(b) The California Highway Patrol, in consultation with the Department of Justice, as well as a representative from the California State Sheriffs' Association, the California Police Chiefs' Association, and the California Peace Officers' Association, shall develop policies and procedures providing instruction specifying how a law enforcement agency, broadcaster participating in the Emergency Alert System, and any other intermediate emergency agency that may institute activation of the Emergency Alert System, and, where appropriate, other supplemental warning systems, shall proceed after a qualifying event described in subdivision (a) has been reported to a law enforcement agency. Those policies and procedures shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) Procedures for transfer of information regarding the victim and the qualifying event from the law enforcement agency to the broadcasters.

(2) Specification of the event code or codes that should be used if the Emergency Alert System is activated to report a qualifying event.

(3) Recommended language for an emergency alert issued pursuant to this section.

(4) Specification of information that shall be included by the reporting law enforcement agency, including which agency a person with information relating to the qualifying event should contact and how the person should contact the agency.

(5) Recommendations on the extent of the geographical area to which an emergency alert issued pursuant to this section should be broadcast.

(c) The California Highway Patrol, in consultation with the Department of Justice, shall review the Amber Plan as adopted by other states and Orange County's Child Abduction Regional Emergency Alert Program for guidance in developing appropriate policies and procedures for use of the Emergency Alert System and, where appropriate, other supplemental warning systems to report qualifying events.

(d) The California Highway Patrol, in conjunction with the Department of Justice, shall develop a comprehensive child abduction education plan to educate children in the state on the appropriate behavior to deter abduction. The California Highway Patrol shall convene a group consisting of a representative from the California State Sheriffs' Association, the California Police Chiefs' Association, and the California Peace Officers' Association, representatives of advocacy groups, and the Department of Education to assist in the development of a plan.

SEC. 2. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.