

Amber Alert suspect being charged with attempted murder

LEEANN RICKHEIT, 38, the suspect arrested in last night's AMBER Alert, is expected to be arraigned this morning in Dudley District Court on several charges, including attempted murder.

When state troopers from the MSP's Violent Fugitive Apprehension Section located RICKHEIT's car in the woods early this morning, RICKHEIT and her daughter were in the car, the car was running, and the tailpipe had been stuffed with clothing, blocking the exhaust. Troopers observed the mother and daughter Ella either sleeping or unconscious in the car.

VFAS Trooper Keller Williams smashed a window to the vehicle and troopers removed the child and RICKHEIT from the car. Two ambulances were called to the scene and Ella was transported to UMASS Medical Center and Rickheit to St. Vincent's in Worcester.

The child is reported to be doing well and RICKHEIT, who was kept under police guard, was held at the State Police Barracks in Sturbridge and will be arraigned today on charges of attempted murder, assault and battery on a child, and reckless endangerment of a child.

The location where VFAS Troopers found the suspect and victim in the car was on the backside of a pond located through the woods behind the Country Store, 131 Stafford Street, Charlton.

VFAS Troopers learned that RICKHEIT frequented that area and often slept in her car there. The troopers had focused on the area after intelligence that was developed led them to check various addresses in Sturbridge and Charlton for RICKHEIT. The troopers conducted numerous interviews of people who might have information about her whereabouts.

VFAS Troopers who worked the case throughout the night were Sgt David Skelly and Troopers Keller, Amy Waterman, and Thiago Miranda. They were assisted during the recovery and arrest by troopers from the Sturbridge Barracks and Charlton Police. Troopers from the State Police Detective Unit for Worcester County assisted in the followup investigation.