

STAY ALERT

Surprisingly, there are only four Prisoner episodes in which a 'Yellow Alert' or 'Orange Alert' is called. In fact, after Arrival, no more yellow ones occur at all, there being merely a mention of a possible yellow alert in Checkmate. In that story, Number Six steals a buggy and the incident is reported to Number Two, but he prefers to allow the homing device in the pendant worn by the brainwashed woman to be tested in trying to track the prisoner. The leader insists, "No action unless you get the yellow alert." This leaves a quartet of stories featuring the Village's colour-coded alarm, now rounded up by Karen Langley.

ARRIVAL

When Number Six makes his first dash for freedom in the series, he runs from the Village, headed for the beach. The Supervisor declares a yellow alert, for the attention of "Post 14". As the prisoner is observed to be leaving the "Northern Perimeter", the order for a yellow alert is repeated and reinforced. During the ensuing chase and fight on the sands, Six defeats his attackers and speeds off in their buggy. As he approaches the "Outer Zone", the crisis response is upgraded to an orange alert. This denotes a serious escalation and the appearance of the white sphere, the non-human guardian. As its prey is overcome, the orange alert is maintained, in view of the need to stand down the amorphous beast and, more importantly, get medical aid to the victim, now lying unconscious on the beach.



THE CHIMES OF BIG BEN

In this episode, the white balloon is summoned twice, its first activation occurring when Nadia swims away from the beach, much farther than is permitted. The Supervisor points out to Number Two that the swimmer will soon be out of range of the Village's scanners and radar. The leader calls an orange alert, which supports the deduction from Arrival that the white sphere is not activated by the lesser yellow alert. The beast surfaces from the sea bed and, in combination with two smaller balloons, shepherds Nadia back to shore.

In her later escape attempt in the story, on a raft with Number Six, she manages to put thirty miles behind them. As an aside, the 'out of range' issue in this and other episodes tends to vary as to the Village's tracking capabilities. In the case of the raft, "Post 5" is contacted and an orange alert is sounded. Once again the white sphere is released to hunt the escapers, but is shot at and retreats.

THE SCHIZOID MAN

At the end of the story, Number Six is reported missing in the Village and Number Two orders an orange alert, referred to as a "general alarm". However, the true purpose of the command is to authorise the release of the Village 'attack dog' and it is not long before the vicious beast kills one of the 'duplicate' Number Sixes. The real one, pretending to be the 'carbon copy' Number Twelve/Curtis, tells Number Two, "Rover got him." This is the first time the murderous entity is given a name and it must be the case that Six already knew what the guardian was called, as the leader now screams an order to the Control Room, "Deactivate Rover immediately!" thereby using the same term for their watchdog. In fact, later on, Number Two reveals, "We're still trying to discover why Rover killed Number Six." However, the non-human guardian is only given its canine name in this single episode.

THE GENERAL

A buggy 'ambulance', its siren sounding, is racing to the beach, where a group of Villagers are chasing a lone individual. Number Six is informed that the target is "The Professor". In the Control Room, the Supervisor delivers several orders, the longest being, "Orange alert! All units! All posts! Orange alert!" This time there is no appearance of the white sphere and so it can be assumed that the raised orange level relates to the need for medical aid, not just looking for a person using the Village surveillance systems.

The four instances of alerts covered above represent all the cases encountered in episodes. There does not seem to be any correlation between the coloured phone handsets in the Control Room or Green Dome and the alerts. Finally, in the Prisoner series, as with the character "Number One", upon whom we never set eyes, we also never encounter a 'Red Alert', presumably the highest level of security standing available in the Village. We can only imagine what *that* would have entailed!

