

Cell Phone GPS

Is the ability to track a cell phone user a violation of privacy or life-saving?

PRO

GPS tracking allows for safety, provides life-saving information

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Virtually all new cell phones come equipped with an astonishing array of features, from cameras to e-mail access. However, even phones that are not technological marvels can be equipped with Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) tracking devices. These tracking devices can pinpoint a cell phone's location and track a phone user's movements.

Critics of GPS systems in cell phones cite privacy concerns. However, the technology protects cell phone users and has already proven useful in many areas, such as U.S. army operations.

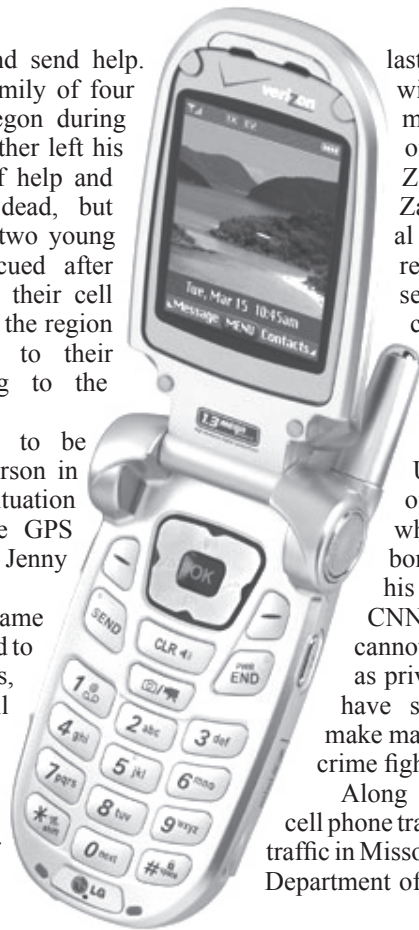
The GPS tracking devices represent a huge step forward in resolving major safety issues for cell phone users. Before GPS technology became prevalent in cell phones, determining the origin of a cell phone call was extremely difficult. Issues arose when stranded cell phone users made 911 calls and were unable to communicate their location or did not know their exact whereabouts.

GPS tracking devices enable police to quickly determine an emergency

caller's location and send help. In Nov. 2006, a family of four disappeared in Oregon during a road trip. The father left his family in search of help and was later found dead, but his wife and their two young children were rescued after a signal sent from their cell phone to a tower in the region alerted authorities to their location, according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

"It's important to be able to locate a person in an emergency situation through cell phone GPS systems," Junior Jenny Thielen said.

In much the same way they can be used to help stranded callers, GPS enabled cell phones can be used to track criminals or terrorists. The U.S. army demonstrated the effectiveness of cell phone tracking



last June when, in conjunction with Iraqi army forces, they monitored the cell phones of terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his associates. Zarqawi was the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq and was responsible for much of the sectarian violence in his country due to the brazen terrorist attacks his group conducted.

The cell phone monitoring gave the U.S. army the location of Zarqawi's safe house, which the army subsequently bombed, killing Zarqawi and his followers, according to CNN. GPS tracking devices cannot be shunted to the side as privacy invasions when they have shown the capability to make major differences in war and crime fighting.

Along with fighting terrorism, cell phone tracking devices are fighting traffic in Missouri. In 2005, the Missouri Department of Transportation instituted

a program that monitors thousands of cell phones in order to map real-time traffic conditions on all major roads in the state. The system tracks the signals that wireless phones send to towers and follows the movement of the phones from one tower to the next to determine road conditions. Furthermore, the data is anonymous, tracking the general flow of traffic rather than individual travelers from their driveways to their destinations. With so many people driving to work on congested roads in the U.S., cell phone tracking technology will become even more important as commuters search for the quickest routes.

Although some critics feel the use of GPS tracking devices represents an invasion of privacy, the technology keeps cell phone users safer and helps users survive emergencies by alerting rescue forces to their locations.

GPS keeps cell phone users safer and helps users survive emergencies by alerting rescue forces to their locations. GPS tracking devices in cell phones have the potential to be useful in many other areas, and the technology should be developed further.

CON

Electronics enable parents to stalk their children

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Is the sureness of safety worth the price of privacy?

Many technological advances are being made in the name of improving the health and safety of Americans. On many cell phones, there is a function that seeks to do just that; if the cell phone user makes an emergency call but is unable to give their location, then the police can locate the cell phone through a Global Positioning System (GPS) chip.

At first glance, this feature, called the E911 system, appears to be nothing but an effort to aid cell phone users. However, many cell phone users do not realize that this feature also means that people besides the emergency response personnel will have access to the user's location through the GPS chip. This aspect of the chip is a breach of cell phone users' privacy and should not be legal.

"It is definitely a scary thought to know that my parents or even an ex-boyfriend could pay a fee, and then get to look at my GPS location from my cell phone. It just does not seem like it is a feature that should be allowed," Junior Emily Kreucher said.

The Electronic Communications Privacy Act, instated in 2000, mandates that confidential information, such as a cell phone user's GPS location, cannot be disclosed by an agency without written prior consent from the party who the information belongs to. If the GPS chip is used for any reason other than for emergency situations, then its use is in direct violation of this act.

It is not in the interests of public security for anyone other than emergency response personnel and the cell phone user to be able to obtain confidential records. While it is important for paramedics and police to be able to locate a person in potential danger, it is also important for cell phone users to remember that these chips mean that they can be tracked anywhere, at any time, with better technology that ensures a more accurate location.

GPS-enabled phones are often used for parents who constantly keep track of their children wherever they go with their cell phones. However, this function enables parents to invade their

children's privacy and destroy any sense of trust that might exist between parent and child.

Parents and teenagers especially have a system of trust that needs to be

a shortcut in the parenting process; trading in the important building of trust for self-assurance under the mask of "safety." It also does not nurture a sense of growing up or becoming independent for the child.

Kate Kelly, author of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Parenting a Teenager," says she does not blame kids who find ways of getting around these tracking features on cell phones, according to CBS News.

"Parents who have done their jobs in establishing good relationships with their teens should not be using extraordinary high-tech devices to follow their teens. You have got to build a relationship based on trust, not fear," Kelly said.

Students should believe in their right to privacy and try to reject cell phones that have these GPS chips installed for anything other than the E911 function. Aid in emergency situations is important; however, privacy and the right to build trust with one's family is important as well.



Track-tion Action GPS-enabled cell phones should only have location tracking in emergency situations, not for parental or other party's use.

Photo by Frances Hathcock

established early on in the teenager's life, and for parents to be able to track their teens at any given moment does not allow for any semblance of trust. This function simply lets adults take