

Track Apple devices down if they go astray

There are two things that set me into a panic if I misplace them even for a moment: my iPhone and my H&K .40-caliber.

One has my life in it and the other protects it. For obvious safety and liability reasons one should never misplace a firearm and to this date my few loss/recovery time lapse has never exceeded a couple of minutes. A permanent loss of my iPhone now or previous smart phones like my older Palm Treos would have and still could be disastrous.

With all my 1,300 contacts and their embedded private information stored on my iPhone, losing it would be a professional nightmare. Yes, I could have the secure lock on it but it is such a pain entering the pin every single time I need to make or receive a call, check my schedule, send or read a text message or any of the numerous tasks I perform on that iPhone many times an hour.

The data on my iPhone is protected from loss since it is routinely backed



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it up by syncing with iTunes on my laptop at least once a week. If it dies, gets lost, or God forbid stolen, I can reload either a spare iPhone or the new one just by syncing and importing from the iTunes backup of the lost iPhone.

Ten years ago my brother Mike and I went to a movie in Houston. Just after it let out he went to the restroom and when we were driving off he remembered he left his phone in the stall.

We raced back there but it was already gone. Next I called his number from my phone and some yahoo answered it right away.

We asked him nicely if we could meet him to get my brother's phone back but he said it would cost us \$100. After some threats and choice words he hung up on us and the phone was history. It would have been great to have had tracking ability to show us where that jerk was with my brother's phone that day.

When the iPhone 3G became available it came with an actual GPS receiver that was accurate within 20 feet. Apple did a great job integrating the GPS with the Maps application that I use the

iPhone to navigate while driving more than my TomTom Go GPS.

Ever since I have had an iPhone I have been looking for that ability to utilize the GPS within the iPhone to tell me where it was in case of loss or theft. I have tried numerous apps that claimed they tracked and reported the lost iPhone but there were certain conditions that had to be met and weaknesses which made it not as robust as I desired — until now.

Apple has put out an awesome new App in the iTunes App Store called "Find My iPhone" that really works. This free app has a version for both the iPhone and the iPad but it also runs on the iPod Touch. The "Find My iPhone" app displays on a map where your iPhone or iPad is via GPS tracking. My brother and I could have really used this capability 10 years ago.

The app just came out June 18 and I immediately installed it, began testing it and then rolled it out into all our family's Apple devices. Now we can track them all from any of them at any time from any location.

If I do ever get my iPhone stolen I can open my iPad, look up my iPhone's

present physical location and retrieve it myself — then I'll call the sheriff.

On a less critical situation of not being able to immediately find my iPhone I can send a signal to it which has it emit a loud sound even with the mute switch turned on. That can be quite handy if it is just under my bed or between seats in the car.

My second option if the location via sound effort did not work is to lock up the phone remotely with "Find My iPhone." At least this may buy me some time and piece of mind while I am trying to find it. Finally, if the iPhone is lost for good I can send another instruction to have the iPhone wiped clean of all personal data which eliminates the big personal data liability from my conscience.

I can do the reverse of all these steps if my wife ever loses her iPad 3G by tracking it with any of our iPhones or even iPod Touches. There are other side effects to this however since my wife can also see where I am at anytime by looking up the location of my iPhone with her iPad. No problem, I'm an open book.

The downside to all this new tracking

capability is that you do have to take out a \$99 a year subscription to MobileMe which more than half the people who tried out "Find My iPhone" were furious about. I gladly paid it since the prospect of the data compromise from a missing or stolen iPhone is unthinkable.

The MobileMe subscription buys you much more than just the iPhone tracking capabilities so that hundred bucks a year will not seem that bad.

You can also sync your calendar, contacts, mail accounts, pictures, and even other files and documents. MobileMe is basically a digital cloud to store and share your data between your Mac and numerous mobile devices along with this new ability to track and locate them.

Bottom line: Since we now have the capability to have mobile access to all our digital files we now can keep those Apple devices safe and track them down if they go astray.

Next week's column: iPhone 4.

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