

Scottish company launches phone-tracking system for businesses

August 7 2006

A Scottish company launched a new system Sunday that will enable employers to track workers' movements through their mobile phones. The tech firm Trisent, based in Dunfermline near Edinburgh, has aimed the system at the business market, where it could have applications in fields from plumbing to sales.

Trisent claims a higher degree of accuracy and a lower cost than rival GPS or Cell-ID systems. Unlike existing systems, its Trilocator uses standard, unmodified cell phones to track phone users instantly

Civil liberties campaigners warned that as such technology becomes cheaper and more widespread, there will be a growing risk of abuse.

"Just because you give up eight hours a day to an employer does not mean that they own you," said Doug Jewell, a spokesman for the rights group Liberty. "There is no reason for an employer to know where you are 24/7."

The key question, he said, is whether an employee can switch off the tracking function from the phone.

But even if use is voluntary, Jewell said, there is a danger employees could be pressured into letting bosses follow their movements.

"In our view there has to be some strategy for regulation of this technology, otherwise you are drifting into the situation where

employees can be monitored with impunity," he said

Trisent said its system allows users to disable tracking by switching off their phones when the working day ends.

"All of our clients must sign up to our code of practice and they must inform employees that there is tracking on the phone," said Gordon Povey, managing director of the firm. "Also each time it is switched on, the phone informs the user that the tracking is activated."

He said that meant it would be impossible for an employer to secretly track staff.

"In the end it is really up to the employer and employee to decide whether or not they want to do this," he said.

Trisent has been testing the technology in pilot program, in which Russian telecoms giant VimpelCom also took part, with a view to offering the service in Russia and Ukraine.

Laws regulating cell phone tracking in Britain were relaxed in May.

Britain's first service allowing parents to track children by mobile phone will be launched Aug. 16.

Povey said Trisent was offering its service only to businesses, not individuals.

*By BEN McCONVILLE, Associated Press Writer
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Citation: Scottish company launches phone-tracking system for businesses (2006, August 7)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2006-08-scottish-company-phone-tracking-businesses.html>

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