

Apple applied for a patent to collect the location history of iPhone users in 2009

May 4 2011, by Katie Gatto

(PhysOrg.com) -- Apple has recently published a patent application, which indicates the company may have plans to collect the location history of iPhone users. Right now, it is not clear if this is related to the recent discovery that iPhones and iPads are able to store historical location information.

The [research](#) shows that both iPhones and iPads regularly collect location information and then store the data in an unencrypted file on the devices. This [data storage](#) was exposed by researchers from O'Reilly. Currently, Apple has not made comment on the reason behind the storage of this information on the device, but they have said that this is not a [security flaw](#). The discovery has aroused the concern of lawmakers, who question why the data is being collected without the end users permission.

The [patent application](#), which was filed by an Apple engineer named Ronald Huang in 2009, was published in March of 2011. It implied that Apple has several ideas for ways to use this type of data in the future. The patent, which is titled "location histories for location aware devices", may be used in conjunction with GPS, [cellular carrier](#) networks and Wi-Fi access points. That data could then be used for mapping location data for users.

[The patent application](#) shows off various methods that would allow users to set preferences for collecting data, and therefore manage the size of the location information database. This would allow users to blank out

certain locations or times of day when the phone should not collect [location data](#). At this point, we are unsure how much control users will have over the tracking.

No word yet on when this patent may show up in future versions of the [iPhone](#).

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