

# Bill would require 'kill switch' for smartphones

December 19 2013, by Terry Collins

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Two U.S. officials have announced plans to introduce legislation requiring smartphones to have a "kill switch" that would render stolen or lost devices inoperable.

California State Sen. Mark Leno and San Francisco District Attorney George Gascon announced Thursday that the bill they believe will be the first of its kind in the United States will be formally introduced in January.

U.S. [law enforcement officials](#) have been demanding that manufacturers create kill switches to combat surging smartphone theft across the country.

"One of the top catalysts for street crime in many California cities is smartphone theft, and these crimes are becoming increasingly violent," Leno said. "We cannot continue to ignore our ability to utilize existing technology to stop cellphone thieves in their tracks..."

Almost 1 in 3 U.S. robberies involve phone theft, according to the Federal Communications Commission. Lost and stolen mobile devices—mostly smartphones—cost consumers more than \$30 billion last year, according to a study.

In San Francisco alone, more than 50 percent of all robberies involve the theft of a mobile device, the San Francisco District Attorney's office said.

Samsung Electronics, the world's largest mobile phone manufacturer, earlier this year proposed installing a kill switch in its devices. But the company told Gascon's office the biggest U.S. carriers rejected the idea.

The CTIA-The Wireless Association, a trade group for wireless providers, says a permanent [kill switch](#) has serious risks, including potential vulnerability to hackers who could disable [mobile devices](#) and lock out not only individuals' phones but also phones used by entities such as the Department of Defense, Homeland Security and [law enforcement agencies](#).

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