

Criminals and Misfits Now Using Apple AirTags to Target Victims

December 30, 2021 - Several months ago, Apple introduced a new product called an AirTag. For those who aren't familiar with it, an AirTag is a tracking device. You can place in your luggage when you fly, and easily find your suitcase is the airline loses it. Or you can attach one to your keys, or in your wallet to find them when you misplace them. You can pretty well track just about anything, anywhere in the world. So it shouldn't surprise anyone that criminals found a use for them almost immediately.

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For instance, AirTags are eliminating the need for car thieves to follow a person home to steal their high-end vehicles. Police are now reporting that some rings of thieves are simply attaching AirTags to cars. Once victims park, the thieves can simply show up (usually late at night) and use an electronic device to unlock the car and drive away. If the victim parks in their garage for the evening, the AirTag will continue to track them so the thieves can take their time and strike at their own convenience.

Police are also starting to report that AirTags are being used to stalk people. Apple is aware of this and has now made some updates to its AirTag software. Originally, only the owner of an AirTag would be able to see any tracking information. But now, anyone who owns an iPhone will be notified if an AirTag is traveling with them. They won't be able to see who the owner of the tag is or how long they have been tracked, but they will know that someone is watching them.

Of course, those warnings only go out to users of Apple products.

While the technology used in AirTags certainly can provide benefits if used properly, it also has some significant downsides for privacy. And for Apple... a company that often sells itself to consumers as being privacy oriented... the lack of foresight in how AirTags might be used and how to deal with those issues is alarming. Here is a thought. At the time they released their first AirTags, they should have had a plan in place to notify everyone... including users of non-Apple products... if an AirTag was tracking them. That's the least they could have done. But they didn't.

by Jim Malmberg

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