

AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile All Reject Smartphone Kill Switch

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AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile and U.S. Cellular have all rejected a smartphone “kill switch,” a technology proposed by Samsung that could render a smartphone inoperable.

As the AP reports, the carriers said no to Samsung’s Absolute LoJack anti-theft technology, saying it presents hacker’s with an opportunity to disable someone’s phone.

According to the AP, the FCC has estimated that one in three U.S. robberies involve phone theft and that law officials like San Francisco District Attorney George Gascon are convinced Samsung’s technology could significantly help to curb the victimization of smartphone users.

When reached for comment, both AT&T and Verizon directed us to comments from CTIA.

In June, CTIA outlined in an FCC filing the potential problems and threats presented by implementing a smartphone kill switch. CTIA notes that once the kill switch is used, the action cannot be undone and the device cannot be reused. Furthermore, CTIA warns that a kill switch could be a target for hackers wishing to inflict malicious harm on individual’s devices or the devices of entire customer groups like the Department of Defense, Homeland Security or those of law enforcement officials.

In new comments, CTIA outlines its alternative efforts, including an integrated database built to prevent stolen phones from being reactivated. The organization reports that all U.S. carriers are onboard with the database and are on schedule to integrate their 4G/LTE databases by Nov. 30. CTIA hopes that carriers—both domestic and international—will follow suit and integrate their data into the database.

Verizon said that it has had a similar database in place for years.

However, a database containing all carriers’ customer phone information could prove to be just as attractive a target for hackers as a smartphone kill switch. It’s also entirely possible that the threat of a smartphone kill switch could serve as just as effective of a threat deterrent as actually using the kill switch.

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