CTIA Partners with Big Tech on Voluntary Anti-Theft Program

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In the face of anti-theft legislation that would mandate cell manufacturers include "kill switch" technology in their devices, CTIA and participating companies Tuesday announced a voluntary initiative to help deter smartphone thefts in the United States.

Called the "Smartphone Anti-Theft Voluntary Commitment," the program counts as signatories a high-profile list of carriers and device OEMs, including Apple, Asurion, AT&T, Google, Samsung, Huawei Device USA, Motorola Mobility, Microsoft, Samsung, Nokia, Sprint, T-Mobile USA, U.S. Cellular and Verizon.

"The safety and security of wireless users remain the wireless industry’s top priority," read a statement announcing the initiative, "and is why this commitment will continue to protect consumers while recognizing the companies’ need to retain flexibility so they may constantly innovate, which is key to stopping smartphone theft."

Each device manufacturer and operating system signatory has agreed that new models of smartphones first manufactured after July 2015 for retail sale in the United States will offer, at no cost to consumers, a baseline anti-theft tool that is preloaded or downloadable on wireless smartphones that provides the remote wipe; the ability to render the smartphone inoperable; the ability to prevent reactivation without the user's permission; the ability to reverse the inoperabiltiy if the phone is recovered by the original owner.

Operators that have agreed to the project commit to permit the availability and full usability of a baseline anti-theft tool to be preloaded or downloadable on smartphones as specified in the committment.

The annnouncement comes in the wake of legislation introduced by a group of Democratic senators that would require all phones sold in the U.S. to have a “kill switch” theft deterrent device installed.

The bill requires devices to have free technology that would “allow the consumer to wipe their personal data off the phone, render the phone permanently inoperable to anyone but the owner, and prevent it from being reactivated on a network by anyone but the owner,” according to a press release on Senator Amy Klobuchar’s website.

The FCC has estimated that one in three U.S. robberies involve phone theft.

Read: Hasty 'Kill Switch' Legislation Has Flaws **[1]**

Read: Kill Switch Has Merit in Theory More than in Practice **[2]**

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