# Legal use of IMEI number

The IMEI number is used to prevent stolen mobile phones from accessing a network and being used illegally. In case the phone is stolen the owner can contract their network carrier and tell them to disable their phone using its IMEI number. When the carrier has blocked the phone, the phone is unable to connect to any network. With the IMEI number the phone can easily be blocked from the network. Even if you change your SIM card, the phone will still be blocked, because the IMEI number is stored on the phone itself and not on the SIM card. [[1]](#footnote-1)

When a carrier gets the message that a phone has been stolen or lost, they contact CEIR (Central Equipment Identity Register) which will blacklist the device. This will make the phone unusable. [[2]](#footnote-2)

Shopping centers in the UK are tracking their costumers’ every move. They track their costumers by monitoring the signal produced by the costumer’s cell phone. The phone is tracked by placing receivers around the shop. The system then uses the triangulation method, by measuring the distance from the phone to the three closest receivers, to see their customers’ position. [[3]](#footnote-3)

The system does not identify the owner, but only the phones IMEI number. It is the operator only that can match the IMEI number to the personal information about the owner. Path Intelligence, the developer of the technology says that the equipment is just a tool for market research. [[4]](#footnote-4)

## What does the user, use the IMEI to?

When the user tries to connect to the mobile network, the phone first looks for an operator where the phone has permission to connect. Then the IMEI number is checked in a central register of all usable IMEI number. If the IMEI number has been reported stolen, the police get notified with the information of the location and when the phone last was used. And if the phone is blacklisted the phone does not get permission to connect to the network. [[5]](#footnote-5)

## What can apps use IMEI to?

When an application is launched it checks the device’s IMEI number and from that number the phone can see the device brand and model. The application can then compare it with a list of devices that is allowed to run the application. This could be used to determine if the phone is fast enough to run the application. [[6]](#footnote-6)

## Why allow apps to read IMEI?

## How does the application get access to the IMEI number?

[[7]](#footnote-7)When an application needs to read the IMEI number, the application has to get permission from the user. The application gets permission though “The Manifest File”, in order to use the methods “TelephonyManager”. This manifest file is the file that later asks the user, if the application is allow to use the command “getDeviceId()[[8]](#footnote-8)”. This command will get the IMEI number and the application can use it however it wants. [[9]](#footnote-9)

When the user buys an application it asks for permission to some “mother-categories”. Here it is the “Phone calls”

“This permission deals with reading the state of the phone and identity. This can be a bit of questionable permission as it allows apps to read the IMEI, IMSI and 64-bit unique ID of the phone. Apps can use this for finding out about piracy, but this is not transparent. The state of the phone deals with an app being able to read if you are on the phone or not.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. <http://www.gsm-security.net/faq/imei-international-mobile-equipment-identity-gsm.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.gsm-security.net/faq/imei-international-mobile-equipment-identity-gsm.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Den der pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Den der pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.mobilsiden.dk/tips/imei-nummer,lid.1513/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.gsm-security.net/faq/imei-international-mobile-equipment-identity-gsm.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.androidtapp.com/android-wallpaper-apps-falsely-accused-of-spyware-and-stealing-sensitive-user-data-fud/comparison-of-android-app-permissions-of-popular-backgrounds-app-versus-jackeey-wallpaper-apps/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://developer.android.com/reference/android/telephony/TelephonyManager.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://developer.android.com/guide/topics/fundamentals.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <http://www.brighthub.com/mobile/google-android/articles/91280.aspx#secn_2> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)