

AirTags: Personal Convenience or Avenue for Abuse?

Background

In April 2021, Apple released Airtags, an inexpensive and convenient personal tracker. The device works by connecting to Apple's network of mobile devices through an ultra wide band bluetooth connection. All iPhones are a part of this network by default, making the network vast and the precision incredible. Airtag success stories include locating a child's life saving medications left on a school bus to helping individuals track down their lost luggage. But is there a darker side to this technology? Concerns were immediately raised about how this technology could be by domestic abusers to stalk their victims. Has Apple done enough to protect at risk individuals or is this technology too dangerous for the public?

Pros

- Travelers love it because they can leave it in their luggage and rest assured that they can track their item through a sophisticated network that uses everyone's Iphone to track the air tag and send its location to the cloud. [Too Many Adapters](#)
- You can attach it to most items of value. It is versatile and can be used to find your keys, wallet, pet, your car, even loved ones. [Forbes](#)
- Alerts a person when an unknown air tag is following him/her. Also provides a sound that can be used to track where the airtag might be hidden. Also comes with Unwanted Alert Tracking System. [Apple](#)

Cons

- A reporter from The Washington Post asked a colleague to track him as a test of Airtags security features. He found that it was "frighteningly easy" to pull off and that Apple's protections were not enough to prevent abuse. ([Washington Post](#))
- Concerns about using AirTags for stalking were immediately raised by advocates for victims of domestic violence ([Mashable](#)). It took Apple nearly eight months to address these concerns ([Apple](#)). Still there are shortcomings to their new protections, from the ability to remove the speaker in the AirTags to the difficulty for a victim to know they are being tracked. An android user must first suspect they are being stalked, download a special app, then change the settings to make it run in the background ([Electronic Frontier Foundation](#)).
- This is particularly dangerous for women. Vice News reported that out of 150 police reports that mentioned AirTags, only one was reported by a male. 50 of those reports were from women who were receiving notifications of unwanted tracking but were unable to find the offending AirTags ([Vice](#)).
- Advocates have called for a sales ban on AirTag because of their potential for abuse. ([S.T.O.P.](#))