Protect Your Smart Device

The high resale value of smartphones – along with the personal information contained on such devices – makes them a prime target for criminals and identity thieves. Here's how you can protect yourself, your device and the data it contains, along with instructions on what to do if your device is lost or stolen.

Safeguard yourself against smart device theft

- Consider your surroundings and use your device discreetly.
- Never leave your device unattended in a public place. Don't leave it visible in an unattended car.
- Note the device's make, model number and serial number, as well as its unique device identification number -- either the International Mobile Equipment Identifier (IMEI), the Mobile Equipment Identifier (MEID) number, or the Electronic Serial Number (ESN). The device ID number is usually found in your device settings or printed on a label affixed to your device underneath the battery. Police may need this informaton if the device is stolen or lost.
- Review your warranty or service agreement to learn what to do if your phone is stolen or lost. You may also consider buying device insurance.

Protect the data on your phone

- Establish a strong password to restrict access. If your device is stolen or lost, this will help protect you from unwanted usage charges and from theft and misuse of your personal data.
- Install and maintain anti-theft software. Apps are available that will:
    - Locate the device from any computer
    - Lock the device remotely to restrict access
    - Wipe sensitive data from the device, including contacts, text messages, photos, emails, browser histories and user accounts
    - Trigger the device emit a loud noise to help the police locate it
- Use your lock screen to display contact information, such as an e-mail address or alternative phone number, so that the phone may be returned to you if found. Avoid including sensitive information, such as your home address.

Be careful about what information you store. Social networking and other apps may allow unwanted access to your personal information.

If your wireless device is stolen

- Attempt to locate the device by calling it or by using the anti-theft software's GPS locator. Even if you think you may have only lost the device, you should remotely lock it to be safe.
- If you have installed anti-theft software on your device, use it to lock the phone, wipe sensitive information and/or activate the alarm.
- Immediately report the theft or loss to your service provider. (See service provider contact information at www.fcc.gov/stolen-phones-contact-numbers.) You will be responsible for any charges incurred prior to when you report the device stolen or lost.

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- Your service provider may be able to use your IMEI or MEID or ESN number to disable your device and block access to the information it carries.
- Request written confirmation from your service provider that you reported the device as missing and that the device was disabled.
- If the device was stolen, immediately report the theft to the police, including the make and model, serial and IMEI or MEID or ESN number. Some service providers require proof that the device was stolen, and a police report would provide that documentation.

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at www.fcc.gov/consumers.

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