

OCTOBER 2013

CRIME PREVENTION TIPS FROM EUGENE POLICE

Tod Schneider, Prevention Specialist, Eugene Police Crime Prevention

## PREVENTING THEFT OF LAPTOPS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Laptops and other electronic devices are some of the most commonly stolen items in our area, but there are things you can do to reduce your vulnerability:

### Don't:

- leave your devices anywhere unsecured and unattended.
- leave your devices visible in a car.
- leave your devices near open or unlocked windows or doors.
- leave your devices visible through windows at home, even if the window is closed!
- leave your devices, even briefly, in uncontrolled spaces, such as a libraries, public dining rooms – or on the floor.
- Advertise your devices! Instead, carry them in a case that does not make the contents obvious.

### Do:

- **Keep your receipts.**
- **Keep your devices locked up whenever possible.** If you have roommates, and they have friends who drop by or throw parties, your laptop becomes vulnerable to anyone “tailgating” into your home and swiping whatever’s available. Keep your devices in your locked room or a secured cabinet or cable-locked to a desk. If you have to leave them in a car, a trunk is more secure than the passenger area, although no guarantee. Just make sure to place them in the trunk PRIOR to arriving at your destination.
- **Mark laptops, bags, and other electronic devices to make them more distinctive.** You can use letters, numbers, colors or graphics – just make it stand out from any other laptop. Your Oregon Driver’s license is a good number to use, in this format: OR1234567DL – as it is easily recognized by law enforcement and easy to check through national databases in order to identify the rightful owner so that we can return your belonging to you.
- **Write down your laptop serial number**, and keep that information somewhere safe (other than on the computer!) Finding this number can be challenging – if it isn’t readily apparent, ask the manufacturer or the store where you bought it, to help find it. There’s frequently a label on the bottom of your laptop (or back or side of your computer tower), which includes the serial number. Occasionally it’s inside the battery compartment. Typically, it will have “S/N” before the start of the serial number (*but not always! Dell* computers use the Service tag number.) The serial number is not usually the same as the model number, operating system license number, service number or product key. In older machines, the serial number is sometimes hard to find. In newer machines they’re usually on the outside, but in some cases are hidden by an attachment, such as a stand or cable on a desktop machine. For computer programmers, there are also instructional codes you can type in to your computer that will tell you a serial number, but again that’s different for each brand. For the average computer user, you can download free software, ([www.belarc.com](http://www.belarc.com)) that will read your computer and identify the serial number. **Mac users can click on the Apple icon** (top left corner), and click on “About this Mac”. Click on “version” twice to get the serial number.



*This label (right) on an HP computer shows the serial number (s/n) as:  
CNF123456789*

- **Use tracking software.** Although not foolproof, this has often been successful. Options include Lojack, MacTrak, PC-Trak or similar GPS tracking software (sources we have found to date include: [www.preyproject.com](http://www.preyproject.com), [www.absolute.com](http://www.absolute.com), or [www.gadgettrak.com](http://www.gadgettrak.com)). This technology should work on any electronic device that connects to the internet, including Ipods and digital cameras. Sometimes computer vendors will have other options to consider as well. No special hardware is required. At costs ranging from free to \$60 a year, this service can locate your laptop anytime it boots up and is within range of wireless access points, or is otherwise connected to the internet. The higher end versions can delete your personal information, insure your computer, or automatically take a picture of the thief with your webcam and send it along with the location information. Once you've reported a theft to the police, you contact the vendor and they activate the software. When they get a hit, they contact the local police to retrieve the laptop for you, or you can pull up a live map with a blinking icon showing your item's location. There are some differences for Mac or PC products that you may need to clarify as new products are developed, particularly which software is most compatible, but basically tracking works as follows:
  - **For most laptops tracking capability is built into the operating system.** Once you download the software, the capability is turned on. A thief cannot delete the downloaded capability once it has been installed. But you do have to choose the right software – Macs promote Gadgettrak, while PCs are more amenable to other products.
  - **Apple products** have similar capabilities for most of their internet-connectable devices through the i-Cloud, already built in, as follows:
 

*Find My iPhone* helps you locate and protect your iPhone, iPad, iPod touch, or Mac if it's ever lost or stolen. With *Find My iPhone* set up on your device, you can do the following:

    - Locate your device on a map
    - Play a sound on your device to help you find it
    - Use Lost Mode to lock and track your device
    - Remotely erase all of your personal information from the device

With iOS 7, Find My iPhone includes a new feature called Activation Lock, which is turned on automatically when you set up Find My iPhone. Activation Lock makes it harder for anyone to use or sell your iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch if it's ever lost or stolen. With Activation Lock, your Apple ID and password are required before anyone can:

- Turn off Find My iPhone on your device
- Sign out of i-Cloud on your device
- Erase and reactivate your device

For more information, see the Apple Support article: [Activation Lock Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Access *Find My iPhone* from any computer at [icloud.com/#find](http://icloud.com/#find), or download and use the free Find My iPhone iOS app. If you're having trouble with Find My iPhone, see the Apple Support article: [Troubleshooting Find My iPhone](#). Last

Modified: Sep 18, 2013

- **Other electronic devices have their own options for tracking.** Most phones require tracking software to be preinstalled. However, there is an app for Android that can be installed **AFTER** it is lost/stolen. It is called "LOOKOUT PLAN B." This app is not as robust as some of the preinstalled apps so always ask about them first. However, if it is the only option, it is better than nothing. It will require the victim's Gmail username and password. Also, if you have multiple phones on the account you will need to determine which one was stolen. Here's a quick step-by-step guide on how to use Plan B to find an Android device if it goes missing:

1. Go to Google Play ([www.googleplay.com](http://www.googleplay.com)) (formerly known as the Android Market). Make sure you visit the desktop web version, not the Google Play app on your phone, and search for Plan B, or go directly to the [Plan B page](#).
2. Log into the phone owner's account using the Gmail username/password.
3. Click Install. Plan B will then begin to remotely download to the selected phone.
4. As soon as it is finished installing (which does require a data connection), Plan B will send an email to the Gmail account telling you it is locating the phone.
5. Once Plan B has located the phone, check Gmail again to find a link to a Google Map of the phone's location. For 10 minutes Plan B will send a series of emails with refined location updates – so be patient, the longer you wait the better the detail!
6. The link will also say how accurate the information is (within "X" meters).
7. If the phone seems to be on the move, or you aren't able to find the phone within 10 minutes of downloading Plan B, you can text the word "locate" to the phone from any other phone in order to start the locate process again.

**There are numerous security apps that have tracking features. Here are a few:**

1. Mobile recovery This app is installed on many Verizon phones that have insurance.  
<http://www.mymobilerecovery.com/>
2. Lookout Security <https://www.mylookout.com/>
3. Where's my Droid <http://wheresmydroid.com/index.html>

•

- Consider adding **sound alarms** to desktop computers, triggered by movement or tampering.

Another good move is to backup your files to an off-site location, such as [www.backblaze.com](http://www.backblaze.com) . Not only does this save your files, but it makes it easier to track the thief if he uses your machine elsewhere – his files will go to the backup site automatically, where you can examine them for clues as to his identity and location.

For more Crime Prevention Tips, call the Eugene Police Crime Prevention Unit at 541-682-5137, by email [policeprevention@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:policeprevention@ci.eugene.or.us) or on the web at [www.eugenepolice.com](http://www.eugenepolice.com)