

'Thefties' nab 'selfies' of smartphone thieves

SAN FRANCISCO, USA: Mobile security startup Lookout is turning smartphones and tablets against gadget thieves with a new feature that - when possible - and snapping a picture of the culprit who took the phone.



The image of a thief taken using Lookout's 'theftie' system and sent to the owner of the phone so the thief can be apprehended by police. Image: [Tom's Guide](#)

A new theft alert function added to Lookout's premium service for Android mobile devices sets out to pinpoint where a gadget might be and, in some cases, even take the thief's picture.

"We are not providing this information for you to go out and find the device yourself," Lookout product manager Greg Lou told AFP.

"It is so you can give it to the police so they can find it for you," he said.

A premium version of Lookout costing US\$3 a month or US\$30 annually already provides features such as backing-up data and finding lost phones.

The new capability lets users tell smartphones to fire off theft alerts if anyone botches a lock-screen code, turns the gadget off, pulls a SIM card, or puts the device in 'airplane' mode to block network connections.

On Android devices, theft alerts will signal front-facing cameras to snap photos in the hope of capturing images of culprits.

According to Lou, the capability referred to by Lookout as taking a "theftie" is not available on Apple devices because the

operating system won't allow it.

E-mails that include maps of the location of stolen devices are fired off to owners. In the case of Android, the e-mails include copies of "thefties" taken with front-facing cameras.

"Phone theft is becoming a really big problem," Lou said.

Lookout launched in 2007 and reports that 55m people worldwide use its mobile security software, a version of which is free.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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