

# Taser adds mobile phone monitoring tool to its arsenal

By by Chris Lefkow - Sat Jan 9, 2010 2:53AM EST

LAS VEGAS, Nevada (AFP) -

Stun gun maker Taser wants to help parents, not with jolts of electricity but with a tool which allows parents to effectively take over a child's mobile phone and manage its use.

"Basically we're taking old fashioned parenting and bringing it into the mobile world," Taser chairman and co-founder Tom Smith said at the Consumer Electronics Show here, where the Arizona company unveiled the new product.

"Because when you give your child his mobile phone you don't know who they're talking to, what they're sending or texting, all of those things," Smith told AFP.

The phone application, called "Mobile Protector," allows a parent to screen a child's incoming and outgoing calls and messages, block particular numbers and even listen in on a conversation.

A dashboard on a parent's phone or a personal computer shows the mobiles being monitored and the permitted callers such as friends and family.

"You can start it out very restrictive and then as they get older you can relax those restrictions as that trust factor's gained," Smith said.

An alert is triggered when an unknown number calls a child's phone.

"I can click on this and it's going to say here's the person's who's calling," Smith said.

"I can either choose to block that call, allow that call or even answer that call and find out who it is before I release it through to my child.

"If it's Grandma, who I forgot to add, I can just click 'always allow' and I'll never see that alert again," he said.

Smith said that when listening in on a call "it's going to announce that to both parties." "We're not doing spyware. This is a collaboration effort," he said.

Smith said text messages, emails, photos and videos can be screened for inappropriate language or pornographic content. "You can see the image and decide whether you want to let it go through or not," he said.

Mobile Protector also allows a parent to disable a phone for a specified period.

"I see so many parents trying to wrestle with their kids to try to get them off the phone during dinner," he said. "You can punch this and say 'You know what, for the next hour your phone's not going to work during dinner.'

"Or, if they get in trouble you can say 'You know what, you're grounded, for 48 hours your phone doesn't work,'" he said.

GPS capability brings up a map showing where a child -- or at least their phone -- is at any given time. "In college I don't need to know where you currently are but for young kids I want to see where they are," he said.

Mobile Protector also has an "emergency feature" that could help locate a missing child, Smith said.

"I can call up 'records release' and it's going to take all of the data -- last known location, phone numbers, texts everything -- and that's going to go to the local authorities," he said.

Along with Mobile Protector, Taser is also releasing a tool known as "Driver Protector" designed to cut back on mobile phone use while behind the wheel. It requires special hardware in the vehicle and a Bluetooth connection.

"If it's a first time driver it's going to disable the phone so they can't text while driving or use the phone," Smith said. "As they get older, we can enable it so they have hands-free talking but still no texting while driving.

"Maybe it will alert me when they go over 90 miles an hour (145 kilometers an hour)," he said. "It's really going to be up to the parent how much they want to limit or not limit."

Smith said Mobile Protector and Driver Protector will be available this summer and will be a subscription service costing between 10 and 30 dollars a month depending on the selected options.

Smith noted that other companies have released similar tools but said "nobody's put the whole thing together" like Taser.