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LOCAL NEWS

Posted: May 10, 2007 08:31 PM

PRINT STORY

GPS Trackers Help Parents Watch Kids

Stacy Lo - sloe@kgmb9.com

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers. It's a sobering statistic and one reason more parents are looking at high tech ways to keep track of their teenage drivers.

When they get behind the wheel, most teenagers will say they're good drivers. But the fact is, 78 percent of teens in the U.S. get a ticket or crash before the age of 18. And one in 20 are killed or seriously hurt in accidents every year.

Now, parents can keep tabs on their teens using GPS technology. Kent Izuka demonstrates one of the many tracking devices on the market.

"I logged in hit status to see where the vehicles are," he explained. "They basically want to see where their child is going - if they are going somewhere where they shouldn't be going, are they speeding."

A little black box you install in your vehicle can tell you just that. From there, you go online to track its progress.

"First we can see now where the car is or what it's doing, like these two are stopped are stopped at these addresses," explained Izuka, owner of Security & Sound Systems.

"It also lets you know if the driver is speeding and where. We can see that this car on May 7, 2007, this car was speeding at 7:26 a.m. going 63 miles per hour."

The device brings peace of mind to parents.

"I think it's an excellent idea and I frankly can't think of any reason why a parent wouldn't agree with that opinion. I think it's a no brainer," one parent told KGMB9.

Not surprising, a lot of teens see it as spying.

"I wouldn't, because when you get your license, you're supposed to be free and with the tracking, it's kind of taking away that freedom," said Marissa Kazuma.

"I would be pretty mad, because it shows they can't trust me and stuff," said Neal Robinson, 17.

"That would not be a good idea and they should already trust me. I wouldn't like it," Mimi Redaja, 17.

John Blewitt is the exception. "I'd be find with it. It's not really that much of a problem for me."

There are dozens of companies that sell the teen tracking systems, such as Travel Eyes, Smart Driver and Alltrack USA. The average price is \$500.

Even cell phones offer GPS tracking. Nextel's Arrive Alive plan tracks the direction and speed of teen drivers. Disney Mobile's Family Locator alerts parents when children leave a designated zone. Verizon Wireless offers a similar program called Chaperone with Child Zones. It also offers another option, allowing you to track a child anywhere through your phone or computer.

"We make it available so they have the option to locate them for peace of mind. I mean, what's more important than the safety of our children?" said Bill Challenger, Verizon Data Systems Consultant.

No matter which way you go, it will cost you. But as one parent told us, keeping your kids safe on the road is priceless.

The tracking devices that go in the car require you pay to a yearly Internet fee on top of the \$500 to buy and have them installed.

The cell phone programs cost up to \$20 a month and only work if the teen has the cell phone on them.



Parents can keep tabs on their teens using GPS technology. There are several tracking devices on the market.

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