



## It shouldn't take a traumatic event to make us realise the importance of personal security for ourselves and our family members when safeguards are already available

WITH personal attacks, tiger kidnappings and night-time assaults on the rise, personal safety has become an increasingly significant issue for today's society. Parents, the elderly and late-night revellers are placing increased emphasis on its importance.

Emmet O'Rafferty, founder and chairman of Top Security, says personal security has become more important for people of all ages. "First of all, people are much more mobile today, and secondly threats are unfortunately increasing. Lone walkers or people who are going into potentially hazardous situations need some form of security, both as a form of comfort or for the real purpose of trying to protect themselves."

The advance of modern technology has brought with it many pros and cons. The Bebo generation is more accessible today than ever before, but technology is now helping in the battle for personal safety.

Late last year, Top Security launched TopLocate, a service that uses a combination of mobile, landline and web technology to provide a range of security alerts, which can be activated in any situation and any location. So, if a person doesn't arrive home when expected, friends, colleagues or parents can be alerted.

On a practical level and in a best-case scenario, the service will act as reassurance to parents, relatives and loved ones. In the worst case scenario — where an alarm is triggered by the person's actual disappearance — more accurate information will be available with which to trace his or her whereabouts.

The first of the services, TopLocate HomeSafe, is intended for working parents of young families. In a typical scenario, children arriving home on their own from school would call a number and dial a code into their landline phone. If the code

isn't recorded on or before an agreed time such as 4pm, an SMS or email alarm will be sent to their parents.

TopLocate Mobile SOS is an add-on service to a person's mobile phone. Someone visiting an unusual or remote location can dial into Top Security's telecom system and record that event, with a notification of when he or she is likely to finish. If all passes off safely, the user simply calls the number again to clear the alarm. If they don't clear the number in time, two people who have been previously nominated — typically a family member and a friend — will be alerted.

A third service, TopLocate Mobile Tracker, requires a GPS mobile phone, which is available from Top Security. This device functions as a panic alarm, with additional tracking and navigation features. By using GPS technology, the handset's location can be pinpointed on a web-based mapping service on a secure section of the TopLocate website. Prices for all services range from €50 plus Vat per annum.

O'Rafferty admits that while the penetration of the market has been widespread, the take-up of the services has been moderate. He argues, however, that more people should consider using them.

"The whole idea of location-based services is one that the market is very aware of. But I don't know whether it's figured out quite how to use the services yet.

"It's all about matching the solution to the risk. There has to be acceptance of the risk in order for people to want to have the solution. It's unfortunate that society has to have something happen to it before it acts."

O'Rafferty says that, thankfully, there have been no extreme situations that necessitated the use of the services, but in the event of

something happening, TopLocate could give Gardaí better ability to respond.

Anyone who has GPS capability on their phone can go on to [toplocate.ie](http://toplocate.ie) and download a free trial of Mobile SOS and HomeSafe. Top Security is continuing to develop TopLocate, and will launch a more comprehensive package for VIP protection shortly, which will be aimed at high-net-worth individuals who face risks above and beyond the norm.

