

Press Release

Please note the strict embargo for Wednesday 18th October at 06:00 (Central European Time)

Disturbing security flaws in smartwatches for children

The Norwegian Consumer Council has uncovered serious security and privacy flaws in smartwatches for children. Strangers can easily seize control of the watches and use them to track and eavesdrop on children.

Together with a security firm Mnemonic, the Norwegian Consumer Council tested several smartwatches sold for children. Our findings are alarming. We discovered significant security flaws, unreliable safety features and a lack of consumer protection.

“It’s very serious when products that claim to make children safer instead put them at risk because of poor security and features that do not work properly,” says Finn Myrstad, Director of Digital Policy at the Norwegian Consumer Council.

“Importers and retailers must know what they stock and sell. These watches have no place on a shop’s shelf, let alone on a child’s wrist.”

The Consumer Council is referring the manufacturers to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority and the Consumer Ombudsman for breaches of the Norwegian Personal Data Act and the Marketing Control Act. These legal acts are based on the EU’s Data Protection Directive and the Directive on unfair terms in consumer contracts, and thus constitutes a breach of EU Law as well. The watches are available in multiple EU member states (see below for an overview).

Numerous failings

1. Serious security flaws

In a few simple steps, a stranger can take control of the watch and track, eavesdrop on and communicate with the child. They will be able to track the child as it moves or make it look like the child is somewhere it is not. The data is transmitted and stored without encryption.

2. False sense of security

The SOS functions in the Viksfjord and Gator watches are particularly poor. The alerts that are transmitted when the child leaves a permitted area are also unreliable.

3. Illegal and non-existent terms and conditions

Some of the apps associated with the watches lack terms and conditions. Nor is it possible to delete your data or user account. These are clear breaches of both the Norwegian Marketing Control Act and the Personal Data Act.

Importers and manufacturers notified of the findings

Ahead of publication of the report, the Consumer Council alerted the Data Protection Authority, which in turn notified the importers and manufacturers in question to allow them to rectify the issues. The watches have continued to be actively promoted after the companies were warned of the findings.



“Yet again, as with [the #toyfail-report](#), we are seeing how internet-connected products fail to comply with consumer and data protection laws, in addition to basic security standards. The industry and the authorities both have a responsibility for ensuring that consumers are not put at risk by unsafe products,” Finn Myrstad stated.

Consumer organisations in Europe and the US will also be pursuing our findings with their respective authorities, both nationally and at an EU level.

Consumer advice

1. We would refrain from buying these of smartwatches for children at this stage as their features and security standards are not satisfactory.
2. If you have already purchased one of these watches, we recommend that you stop using it, turn it off and uninstall the app.
3. Ask the seller for your money back and point to the security failings, the features that do not work and the privacy breaches.

Fact box

Smartwatches for children essentially work as a smartphone that communicates with the parents via an app. Parents can communicate with their child through the mobile phone function and track the child's location via the app.

The Consumer Council tested the Gator 2, Tinitell, Viksfjord and Xplora watches, which are being sold in Norway by retailers such as XXL and Enklere Liv. There are other models similar to those we tested being sold under different names. Tinitell performed consistently better than the other watches in our test, but it also offers fewer features than its competitors.

Contact information

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Press photos

- Press Photo Finn Myrstad: http://fbrno.climg.no/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/EPA_Finn_Myrstad.jpg
- Pictures of watches and poster for social media: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t2v3aotd7zjapw8/AADoHVNxOI-ho7poad61jntMa?dl=0>

Video explaining security flaws in details (4:30 mins) : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHdsIRGq0ZU&feature=youtu.be>

(note: this video is in “private mode” and is not searchable until embargo deadline (18th October), please do not share or make public before)

Video explaining the problems for consumers is forthcoming before publication