

New Smartphone App Invades Gun Owners' Privacy

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Claire Healey July 11, 2013, 5:06 pm

The new Gun Geo Marker app, released for Android phones to Google's Play app store on July 7, allows users to disclose the addresses of gun owners they suspect to be unsafe. Its purpose is "to help others in the area learn about their geography of risk from gun accidents or violence."

The app has been blasted with negative reviews citing the dangers of revealing such information and its unmitigated invasion of privacy. The app's developer, Brett Stalbaum, has received threats.

According to FoxNews.com:

"The gun rights community has been busy making personal threats (we remain unconcerned), as well as spamming the Gun Geo Marker database with false markers. Though these fake markers are not useful for identifying dangerous guns and owners, they are certainly representative of the highly paranoid reaction we have come to expect from any attempt to improve gun safety in the United States. This kind of reaction — automatically lining up on the wrong side of reasonable measures to improve the safe use and ownership of guns — aids and abets the crisis of child shooting deaths," Stalbaum said.

The app has far greater potential for danger than protection. Not only can criminals locate the homes of gun owners to steal firearms, but they can also more easily identify gun-free homes, which are then more likely to become targets.

"This makes those who don't have guns an easier target for criminals. It's a safety issue," John Lott, gun expert and author of the book *More Guns, Less Crime*, said. "I've debated a lot of gun control advocates over the years, and I've never met someone who has been willing to put up a sign in front of their house indicating that their home is a gun-free zone."

The app is not available on the iPhone.

In January, the *New York Journal News* posted the home addresses of area residents with permits for gun ownership. After threats were called into the paper's offices and the home addresses of the editors were posted online, the *Journal News* took down the information. Google Play would do well to follow suit and take down the app for its blatant invasion of citizens' privacy.