



GUARDIAN SAFECALL

# Protecting your Protectors

Agencies across America whose staff are out in the field protecting and caring for vulnerable adults and children, are now adopting personal safety alarms and apps to help protect workers from harm. The choice generally is between an app-based solution and a specialized panic device.

Which is best for your agency and application?



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Guardian MPS  
Mobile Personal Safety

You have decided to deploy a Personal Safety solution for your mobile workers. Good! They will be able to more easily call for help if they are worried about their safety, and your organization will be able to show positive steps taken to mitigate risk and to comply with safety legislation.

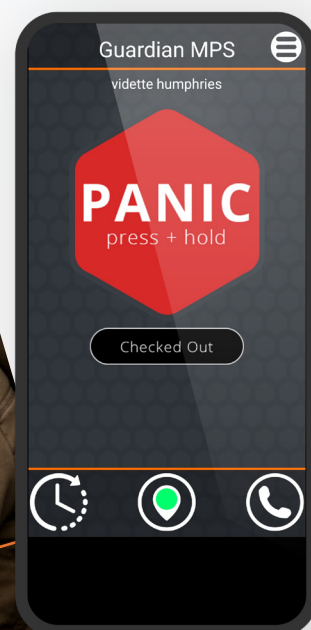
There are several decisions to make, and a key one is whether to use an app installed on existing worker phones, or to deploy a specialized panic device. Which is better?

Here's a statement that you may have heard or read, recently:

"Using an app is better — the workers always have their phone, it's always charged, and it's always close at hand. A device is just another piece of tech that has to be carried around"

Some aspects of that statement are true; there can indeed be resistance to carrying another piece of equipment, particularly if it is bulky and heavy. And it is more easily forgotten, and once forgotten, a worker may decide to leave it, rather than go back home or to the car to get it. If they forget their phone they will almost certainly go back to pick it up. Also, they are more likely to keep their phone charged, whereas they may forget to charge their device. So, clearly, an app is better.

At a first pass it seems that the app approach is pretty good - the workers do not need to carry another device, they can install an app on their phone, and if something goes wrong they can grab the phone, access the app and raise an alarm. And they probably have a timer too, that will activate an alarm if they do not check-in at the end of their activity.





The app-only approach is common, and can work well. But in trying to provide the highest possible level of safety for workers who may be in a lot of danger, there are also some drawbacks to the app-only approach, and they should be considered as part of the decision-making process.

Some issues that are worth considering:

#### Battery Life

For a safety app to report location it has to use the phone's GPS data. In a small number of cases this can adversely affect the phone's battery life. It doesn't always happen, but it also doesn't never happen. If you want to irritate your workers, give them an app that drains their battery. They will quickly stop using the app, because - among other inconveniences - if the battery runs out, they can't even call 911.

#### Software Updates

Apple iOS and Google's Android frequently issue automatic, overnight operating system updates. Among their objectives are to enhance their product's performance, - including battery-life - and to maintain tight control of the OS and the data that their phones collect. It is not unheard of for such an update to conflict with some of the apps running on the phone. And in trying to conserve battery, iOS and Android will in some circumstances shut down background processes that 3rd party apps need. Usually, there are work-arounds, and the safety app developer can issue updates that restore operations. But there are no guarantees that one day, an OS change could seriously or even permanently interfere with an app's operation. It is not necessarily a high risk, but it is not unheard of, either.

The phone as a target. If someone is determined to attack and harm your employee, there is a strong possibility that they will try to take their victim's phone and destroy it. If the attacker gets to the phone first, the employee is in a much worse position; in desperate trouble, with no phone on which to call for help. Now, even 911 is out of reach.

#### Cellular Network Coverage

A mobile phone will always have a sim card that is connected to a single cellular network such as AT&T, Verizon, or T-Mobile. As such, it is constrained by the coverage that that operator has in your area. So if your carrier has a black spot then all of your phones - and your safety apps - will have the same blackspot. Once your employees are in that area, they don't have any coverage, not even to call 911.

#### In a state of busy-ness or panic

People are on the road, it's a busy day, they're under pressure... maybe they don't activate the app, or connect the cable, or do whatever they have to do to make it ready.

Victims have told us that when an attack happens it can be totally unexpected and incredibly violent. Terrifying. They may have only seconds to react.

In their safety and de-escalation training they'll have been told to keep calm, don't raise arms, don't shout, threaten or point, and - crucially - do not break eye contact.



So, a device is better then?

In designing our SafeCall device we addressed several of these issues;

#### Battery Life

The SafeCall device has many of the characteristics of a phone. It is a phone-in-disguise, so to speak. It has a battery, a microphone, a sim card, a GPS chip and various other components. But it does not have a screen, or a lot of other apps running on it. As a result the battery life is more predictable and may well last longer. To make it easier still, each device is shipped with TWO charging beds, one for the office and one for the home.

#### Own Operating System

The Safecall device has its own OS, which will never be affected by Apple or Google, so unexpected OS changes are not going to happen.

#### Light and discrete

Safecall is about the size of a key-fob, and it weighs in at all of 2ozs. It is small and inconspicuous. It is not recognizable as a phone and is therefore less likely to be subject to targeting.

#### Easy to activate discretely

SafeCall is activated by means of a single button, which with a little practice can be activated without any visual contact. There are no passwords, just a button, waiting to be pressed. Press the button, hold for 3 seconds. That's it.

#### Cell Coverage

One of the most popular and clever aspects of the SafeCall device is that unlike a smartphone it is not constrained to your standard cell network. Instead SafeCall has a Smart, Multi-Network sim that can connect to TWO networks. If it can't get a signal on AT&T it will automatically try to connect on T-Mobile, and vice-versa. Network coverage is still not guaranteed but in tests this has delivered much better coverage.

Note that the contract for the sim is between us and the sim provider - our customers do not need to sign with AT&T and T-Mobile.

#### So the question is app or device; and the answer is??

**Both.** Guardian can be deployed as an app-only solution, or as an app and device solution. You can give the app to everyone and the device to higher-risk workers, or, as we recommend, you can give every employee a device, with payment plans that make it very affordable. Or you can start with apps and add devices later.

Over 10+ years of experience working with tens of thousands of lone workers we have learned that a user with a device may have a better chance of calling for help than a user with only an app, for the reasons discussed here.

The device does cost a little more, and it is indeed another piece of equipment to carry.

But we're talking about people's safety - and the device is small, light, and inconspicuous. We feel that carrying it is a small price to pay for the extra security it provides.

**Having a phone AND a device is always better because it creates extra options:**

I forgot my Safecall device.

I have my phone.

I dare not reach for my phone on the table.

But I can reach the device in my pocket.

My phone has no coverage.

The device has a signal!

My phone is out of battery.

The device is charged.

I forgot to charge my device.

It's OK - I can use the app on my phone.

He has taken my phone.

He hasn't noticed the device.

We hope to have offered here some helpful thoughts about the app-or-device approach. Obviously we would love to have you to become a Guardian customer, but even if you don't, we hope these thoughts will be helpful in making your app or device decision