



Constructive articles about AlertBox from two leading US technology web sites.

Technovelgy.com

Wireless Device Warns the Neighbors [US edition]

Doesn't that sound a lot friendlier and more neighborly than calling an anonymous stranger and hoping for a response?

[Gizmodo](http://Gizmodo.com)

Fighting crime sans wires: AlertBox

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2nd November 2004



AlertBox Wireless Device Warns The Neighbors

A wireless device called an AlertBox is going on sale in the United Kingdom this week; it allows neighbors to warn each other about "dodgy characters" on their street. It can also be used to transmit requests for help in the event of fire or medical emergency.



The AlertBox device is about the size of a small paperback book; it sends short text messages. It will be sold to individuals for £147. Once an AlertBox has been activated, all of the AlertBoxes within 100 meters are automatically activated. By pressing just one button, a message can be sent to all of the neighbors, making it easy to use in stressful situations. It is currently in trial use in Devon, South Wales and north London; Neighbourhood Watch organizations are involved in the trials.

I think that there is an interesting comparison to be made with services in the US like Lifeline Medical Alarm, in which a request for help goes to a central dispatch office, rather than to neighbors. Take a look at some of the reasons that AlertBox Limited brings up in favor of their device:

- AlertBox has an important contribution to make to security and peace of mind. An AlertBox network provides a channel for communication within a neighbourhood, reducing isolation, preserving privacy and helping residents to live the lifestyle of their choice.
- Many incidents that worry or alarm residents are not matters for the police, making any remedial action difficult. With an AlertBox network,

a resident can alert neighbours to antisocial behaviour, unwanted callers and other disturbing situations.

- By empowering residents to take action, AlertBox helps to promote a more cohesive community.
- An additional and valuable function is the ability to use AlertBox to call for neighbours' help in an emergency, saving valuable minutes before emergency services arrive.

Doesn't that sound a lot friendlier and more neighborly than calling an anonymous stranger and hoping for a response? This is almost an "open source" kind of help network. The company is even working on a multiple-language capability, so a message sent in one language can be read in another, again making it more useful than a phone in multi-lingual neighborhoods.

In Jack Vance's award-winning novel *The Last Castle*, the expatriot aristocrats who rule Old Earth have enslaved a race from Etamin 9 - the Meks - to do their work for them. The Meks make excellent servants because they have a natural wireless network built into their nervous system. They have metallic quills that serve as antennae. Whenever one Mek gets into trouble, it notifies the others wirelessly. The original article is available [here](#).

Gizmodo
[US edition]

MONDAY, NOV 1 2004

Fighting Crime Sans Wires: AlertBox

Crime rates are going down all over, including within the US as well as the UK. Despite this, public *perception* of crime rates is going up. Why? I don't know, and it doesn't really matter. The point is people are increasingly scared, even as they have less reason to be. It's been inevitable that some smart person would cash in on this paranoia eventually, and I'm pleased to note that they've gone about it in what is probably the best possible way (read: least exploitive) with AlertBox. You can use it to discreetly warn and communicate with your neighbors about that scary person walking down the street (provided they, too, have an AlertBox). Then, when that person pulls out an assault rifle and starts dropping caps in your children playing in the street—which luckily happens twice a day in my neighborhood, if the ammo store is open—you can have it dial 999 (that's 911 stateside) for you and alert the authorities.



I feel like the fact that there's a market for devices like this is sad commentary on how people's perceptions of crime stack up to reality. It's still an interesting wireless gadget that could help keep people and cities safer.

<http://www.gizmodo.com/archives/fighting-crime-sans-wires-alertbox-024618.php>