**'Kill switch' may be standard on U.S. phones in 2015**

**(CNN)** -- The "kill switch," a system for remotely disabling smartphones and wiping their data, will become standard in 2015, according to a pledge backed by most of the mobile world's major players.

Apple, Google, Samsung and Microsoft, along with the five biggest cellular carriers in the United States, are among those that have signed on to a voluntary program announced Tuesday.

All smartphones manufactured for sale in the United States after July 2015 must have the technology, according to the program from [CTIA-The Wireless Association](http://www.ctia.org/).

Supporters say the feature would keep thieves from taking mobile devices by making phones useless while allowing people to protect personal information if their phone is lost or stolen. Its supporters include law enforcement officials concerned about the rising problem of smartphone theft.

"We appreciate the commitment made by these companies to protect wireless users in the event their smartphones are lost or stolen," said Steve Largent, president and CEO of CTIA. "This flexibility provides consumers with access to the best features and apps that fit their unique needs while protecting their smartphones and the valuable information they contain."

HTC, Motorola, Nokia are among the other smartphone makers who have signed up, along with carriers AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, Sprint and U.S. Cellular.

The feature would let a phone's owner erase contacts, photos, e-mail and other information, and lock the phone so it can't be used without a password.

The feature, which will be offered at no cost to consumers, also will prevent the phone from being reactivated without an owner’s consent. The data would be retrievable if the owner recovers the phone.

The new pledge marks a reversal for wireless carriers, who have resisted making the kill-switch feature mandatory. Industry representatives have said they fear hackers exploiting remote-kill technology, while critics accuse the industry of not wanting to lose money from replacing and activating stolen phones.

**Who:**

**What:**

**When:**

**Where:**

**Why:**

**How:**

**GIST Summary:**