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News Blog

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GPS-enabled school uniforms hit Japan

by Leslie Katz

With GPS-enabled school uniforms on the way in Japan, the timeless parental refrain "don't forget your jacket" is about to assume new significance.

According to gizmo hub **Engadget**, the jackets, in addition to letting parents track their kids, sport a panic button that children can push in an emergency, immediately summoning a security agent to their exact location. The GPS-enabled blazers are made by school uniform maker Ogo-Sangyo, with GPS technology provided by Secom, which previously teamed up on a **kids' backpack with built-in GPS**.

RFID tags have been used **to track kids in Japan before**, and they've been considered elsewhere, **including the United States**.

But the notion of electronic IDs in schools has proven more than a little controversial, with some calling them a cutting-edge way to monitor attendance and keep kids safe and others assailing them as an assault on the youngsters' right to privacy.

The student tags employ the same technology used in building access badges commonly issued to employees for security purposes.

Drivers who sign up for quick-pay toll programs use similar devices to cruise by toll booths. And RFID technology has recently been found in chain stories, libraries and **casinos**.

Leslie Katz

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Leslie Katz, senior editor of CNET's Crave, covers gadgets, games, and myriad other digital distractions. As a co-host of the recently retired CNET News Daily Podcast, she was sometimes known to channel Terry Gross and still uses her trained "podcast voice" to bully the speech recognition software on automated customer service lines. E-mail Leslie.

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