POKÉMON GO

On 07/06/2016, Nintendo Company Limited released "Pokémon Go," an interactive virtual game for mobile devices that utilizes the global positioning system (GPS) and camera to allow players to see and virtually capture Pokémon creatures while walking around their communities. The game gained popularity with an estimated 5% of Android users downloading it within the first few days.[1] The free mobile application (app) identifies the player's location and encourages the player to physically walk around the real world, causing some players to reportedly injure

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themselves from tripping and falling, unknowingly walking into roadways without checking traffic, and becoming distracted while using the app while driving a motor vehicle. The app warns users to "Remember to be alert at all times. Stay aware of your surroundings."[2]

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The game allows players to use a customizable avatar to move along a brightly colorized version of Google Maps. Pokémon characters are hidden throughout the map and players are notified when a Pokémon is nearby. The player must throw a virtual ball to capture the creature in an effort to achieve a higher score within the game. The mobile device's camera can also be activated to show the cartoon Pokémon creature within a real life setting. Inside the game, players must physically search out iconic places called "Pokéstops" and "Gyms" to further advance. Pokéstops are places where players can acquire supplies, training for the Pokémon characters, and obtain healing powers after battling other characters. Gyms are places where the Pokémon can battle other players and increase their level within the game. Pokéstops and gyms are throughout communities at places such as historical landmarks, memorials, churches, schools, restaurants, and retail stores.[3] In some cases, police stations, public buildings, and houses located on private property have been designated as Pokéstops and gyms. Law enforcement personnel have responded to an increase in trespassing incidents and reports of suspicious individuals since the game's release.[4]

The game also allows players to set a "lure module," intended to attract more Pokémon to a specific location for a short period of time. When a lure module is active, other Pokémon Go players can be drawn to the physical location to capture additional Pokémon characters. On 07/09/2016, four male suspects in St. Louis, Missouri activated a lure module within the game and drew players to a secluded parking lot, where they allegedly robbed eleven players at gunpoint. Using the geo-location feature, criminals are able to use the luring mechanisms of the app to seclude unknowing victims and anticipate the arrival of gamers.[5]

Citizens should be cognizant of players using the app on their mobile devises. Distracted game users might not be aware of their surroundings or use caution when entering into isolated areas. Criminals might also seek the opportunity to target players by luring them or waiting for their arrival at Pokéstops and gyms.

[1] Lee, D. (2016, July 12). Pokemon Go is a monster mobile hit. *bbc.com*. Retrieved on 07/12/2016 from http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-36763504.

[2] Hirtzer, M. (2016, July 12). Amid frenzy, Pokemon Go leads to robberies and injuries. *Reuters.com*. Retrieved on 07/12/2016 from http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-nintendo-pokemon-crime-idUKKCN0ZR26S.

[3] Serenity, C.,et al. (2016, July 10). Beginner's guide: How to play Pokémon Go! *Imore.com*. Retrieved on 07/12/2016 from http://www.imore.com/pokemon-go#wtf.

[4] Fan, C. (2016, July 11). Pokemon Go app creating safety concerns while local trainers are out "catching 'em all." *Abc30.com.* Retrieved on 07/12/2016 from http://abc30.com/news/pokemon-go-app-creating-safety-concerns-while-local-trainers-are-out-catching-em-all/1423109/.

[5] Peterson, A. (2016 July 10). Pokemon Go has been used to target armed-robbery victims in Missouri, police say. *Chicago Tribune.* Retrieved on 07/12/2016 from http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-pokemon-go-robbery-20160710-story.html.