



## ***GPS Is NOT The Magic Answer For Tracking Memory Care Residents***

*By Susan Saldibar*

Okay, GPS is hands-down great. Especially for sprawling areas like Irvine, California where every street looks the same, there are almost zero landmarks, and directions change every few seconds. GPS has kept me on time more than once. And I know plenty of parents who use GPS to track their kids' movements (well, at least until the kids get the idea and turn off their iPhones).

So, I understand the rationale behind a question that Jacquie Brennan, Vice President of Operations for [Vigil Health Solutions](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner, seems to get frequently. *"Why don't you use GPS in your emergency response solutions?"*

### **There are three good reasons GPS isn't the magic answer, at least for now:**

GPS only tracks outdoor activity.

The devices on both sides (caregiver and resident) need to be turned on.

GPS is a battery hog; and it requires constant battery recharging on both sides; that means continuous recharging of your phone and whatever GPS sensitive device is with the resident.

That means, even if you find a way to create a GPS-enabled wristband or pendant, a) the resident has to wear it at all times, b) they have to keep it turned on, and c) they have to keep it charged. Not impossible, but not very practical for some residents, especially those with dementia who are typically the highest risk.

### **So while we're waiting for GPS and battery breakthroughs, what should we be doing?**

There is plenty you can do safeguard the inside of your community to reduce the threat of a resident even getting to the front door, let alone walking out. Jacquie recommends:

Use sensors in key areas to detect unusual movement:

In residents' beds, to detect restlessness or movement out of bed.

At key doorways, near the bathroom and the apartment or room exit.

Use sensor activity reports to create a unique profile for each resident that maps out his or her normal movement patterns.

Then set up "rules" to create custom alerts when a resident's movement is outside their normal patterns.

"The big concern on most peoples' minds is how to find a resident when they have left the building," says Jacquie. "We recommend utilizing technology, design and programs that reduce the likelihood of that even happening."

## **Vigil isn't sitting around waiting for technology to come to them.**

Here's what they're doing:

Working with GTX Corp SmartSole® to integrate their GPS insole with the Vigil system. The insole can be unobtrusively inserted into a resident's shoe so that they are less likely to try to remove the tracking device.

Utilizing products such as RoamAlert to alert staff when residents attempt to leave the building through a protected door.

Continuing to collaborate with other technology leaders to create the next generation of tracking and monitoring devices.

And, given the rate at which technology is developed these days, who knows? It may not even be GPS that comes to the rescue of a memory impaired individual who walks out the front door. It may be something altogether different.

What's important is that communities make use of some of the amazing applications that are available today. Keeping our residents safe, while preserving their right to move around, serves everyone's best interests.



This article has been brought to you by [Vigil Health Solutions](#) in partnership with [Senior Housing Forum](#).

