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### Zurich Unveils BlackBerry App For Tracking, Alerting Employees

By Amon Cohen

**AUGUST 12, 2009** -- Insurance giant Zurich this week is launching a traveler security alert and tracking system that can pinpoint the location of travelers through BlackBerry devices' global positioning system capability. Zurich claims Nomadz is the first travel security application for the BlackBerry and the first to locate travelers and deliver them location-specific alerts using the GPS. Zurich is unveiling Nomadz in London and Frankfurt this week and is making it available to customers in both Europe and North America.

Nomadz also traces travelers through the method used by most other tracking systems—collating reservation information from bookings through global distribution systems—and through a third method, tracing travelers through their proximity to mobile phone cell towers.

David McLean, vice president sales and marketing for World Travel Protection, the wholly owned emergency medical and travel assistance subsidiary of Zurich that developed Nomadz, said this method is not as accurate as the global positioning system. Instead of pinpointing a phone to within a few feet, it only will locate a phone within a city block. However, unlike the GPS, it is not impeded by cloud cover or if the user is inside a large building.

McLean said that tracking via GPS and cell tower positioning is an important breakthrough for traveler security systems. "Just because you have a reservation to go somewhere, it doesn't mean you are there," he said. "Companies want to know precisely where a person is as well as where they are supposed to be."

Corporations can determine how often they wish their BlackBerry-carrying employees to be "polled," the terminology for locating a person via GPS. They also can set a geographical limit on their

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communication of alerts. For example, if the alert concerns disruptions caused by a demonstration in Moscow, McLean said the information could be sent only to BlackBerry carriers within a 50-kilometer radius of the city.

Zurich employs a team of researchers to create alerts based on information culled from governmental and travel advisory sources and what it describes as "data unique to Zurich." It also operates a 24-hour emergency assistance center that can be contacted by pressing a single button on the Nomadz application.

The ability to track traveling employees with great precision raises several obvious implications for civil liberties and data privacy. For example, employees may be concerned that the technology is used to track them for reasons other than safety and assistance, such as for disciplinary investigations. McLean said he expects corporations that sign up for Nomadz to require employees to keep the GPS capability switched on during working hours.

"The issue of privacy is one between employers and their employees," said McLean. "When the question is raised, we point out that employees have the ability to switch off the GPS after hours and that normally answers their concerns."