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KEYSTONE MacCentral

printout

Keystone MacCentral Macintosh Users Group www.keystonemac.com

Keystone MacCentral July Meeting

Please see your membership email for the links to this month's Zoom meeting or email us at KeystoneMacCentral@mac.com.

During our program this month we plan to discuss

* Backup drives

* Apple Watch tutorial

We have virtual meetings via Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month.

Emails will be sent out prior to each meeting. Follow the directions/invitation each month on our email – that is, just click on the link to join our meeting.

Contents

By Glenn Fleishman

AirTag in the News: NYPD Recommends, Apple and Google Propose Industry Tracking Standard

The New York Police Department produced a video to accompany a recent announcement: stick an AirTag in your car to help with recovery in the event of theft. In conjunction with the NYPD's announcement, New York City Mayor Eric Adams said a nonprofit had donated 500 AirTags to give away to NYC residents. Adams even held up a boxed AirTag, effectively giving Apple an endorsement and free advertising.

On the flip side of that news was a press release from Apple and Google about an industry standard the two companies jointly drafted to provide consistent presence-alerting behavior for tracking devices made by any company. This would include freestanding trackers like the AirTag, Samsung's SmartTag, and a reported upcoming Google competitor, not to mention devices with less-comprehensive tracking coverage from Cube, Chipolo, and Tile. The standard would require compatible alerts, movement sensors, and identification across ecosystems, making it far easier for someone to detect unwanted tracking.

These two stories represent the tension inherent in ubiquitous, hard-to-detect tracking devices. On the one hand, they're a powerful tool to enable the recovery of stolen items (or find lost objects, which is Apple's primary goal for the AirTag). On the other hand, they're the easiest method in human history to track someone's whereabouts surreptitiously down to the minute. Any device that simplifies finding your own stuff will always have the effect of reducing other people's privacy and increasing their risk; limiting tracking capabilities to reduce stalking also lessens the utility for item recovery.

Let's look at these announcements.

Hill Street Bluetooths

While many statements made by politicians, retail stores, and police departments about rises in crime are overstated or simply inaccurate, it's true that car theft is way, way up in most American cities—in some cases, two to four times higher in 2022 compared with the immediately preceding years!

It's not that criminal masterminds suddenly decided stealing cars was in. Rather, models of Hyundai Motor Group's Kia and Hyundai—about a decade of the former's models and six years of the latter's—have an extraordinarily easy-to-exploit flaw that went viral in mid-2022. Yes, it spread widely on social media. It can reportedly take a minute or less to drive off in one of the vulnerable models. Over eight million cars are affected. Hyundai took until February 2023 to release a software fix—one that must be installed at a dealer—that makes those models vastly harder to hijack.

This context is important for why the NYPD is suddenly pushing the AirTag. Near the end of 2022, the NYPD said nearly 13,000 cars had been stolen in New York City so far that year—32% more than in 2021. There are about 2 million registered cars in the five boroughs, so as many as 1 in 150 are being ripped off.

If this increase in theft could be attributed to organized crime, AirTags likely wouldn't help. Professional thieves know to look for trackers and crush or toss them. They also find and remove sophisticated ones with GPS and cellular connections that can plug into a car's diagnostic port or have their own battery. With an iPhone, Apple's Android tracking app, or more sophisticated Bluetooth scanning apps, a thief who cares that they're being tracked can find and disable the tracker. (This doesn't include cars with embedded tracking and cellular systems; I expect those are more generally avoided and better at immobilizing the car when stolen.)

All reports indicate that a significant portion of the jump in thefts is due to opportunity. Somebody watches a YouTube or TikTok video and sees how easy it is to steal one of the vulnerable models. They lack the impulse control and self-preservation that keeps most people from committing crimes, and off they go.

A case in point: our older car was stolen several years ago. We thought it was gone for good until it was found several weeks later, unlocked and full of trash, in a supermarket parking lot. The thieves stole it and abandoned it as casually as though they were taking a bus. Had we had a tracker, we likely could have found it right away! (Our insurer paid generously to get it towed and repaired.)

Even so, Apple designed the AirTag to help find your lost items, not assist in theft recovery, so significant limitations remain in the NYPD's message:

- **Can't share the live location:** You must either ride with the police (unlikely), give them your unlocked iPhone (a bad idea), or relay the location to them. The NYPD video seems to show live updates. It's much more likely that if you can tell the police where the car is parked, they'll pursue tracking it down.
- **Multiple owners:** If multiple people use the same car at different times, such as in a family or business, a single AirTag allows only the associated owner's Find My apps to provide location information. Apple doesn't offer any sharing method within a family, either.
- **Lack of interest by police:** Despite the NYPD promoting the AirTag as a way to help recover stolen cars, many police departments have dramatically dropped the priority of these cases. See this, this, this, this, and similar articles.

Regardless, if you live in a city suffering from increased auto theft, putting an AirTag or third-party Find My tracker in your vehicles is likely worth the minimal investment. If you drive the same car as other people, one of you will have to be "it." Everyone else will receive notifications whenever they drive the car or are a passenger without the paired owner in it. Apple gives you the option to mute alerts indefinitely in those cases. Find a hidden place to put the tag other than the glovebox.

Let's not disregard bikes, too, which can easily cost thousands of dollars. Bike thefts increased dramatically for a time when bikes were scarce and prices sky-high. Those have tapered off but remain a constant burr in bikers' saddles. You can stick an AirTag in a bag, but there are better options:

- **TagVault: Bike:** Elevation Lab makes several kinds of AirTag cases. The TagVault: Bike ($19.95) is waterproof and screws into a standard water-bottle cage mount. I reviewed it for Macworld.
- **Knog Scout:** A unique third-party Find My item, the Knog Scout ($59.95) offers two distinct kinds of protection. You can set a motion alarm over Bluetooth using its app and then enable or disable it while within range. For broader tracking, the Scout also supports the Find My network. It's also rechargeable via USB-C without unmounting. See my full review.
- **VanMoof bikes:** Only one e-bike maker has integrated Find My tracking into its bikes so far. VanMoof includes tracking in some of its models.

A Standard to Protect against Unwanted Tracking

In an acknowledgment that tracking technology can be used for stalking, Apple and Google released a draft of a proposed industry specification via the well-accepted Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) process. With the blunt title "Detecting Unwanted Location Trackers," the spec stakes out the problem territory in a technical way and suggests how to provide significant minimum rules that all devices complying with the standard would have to support.

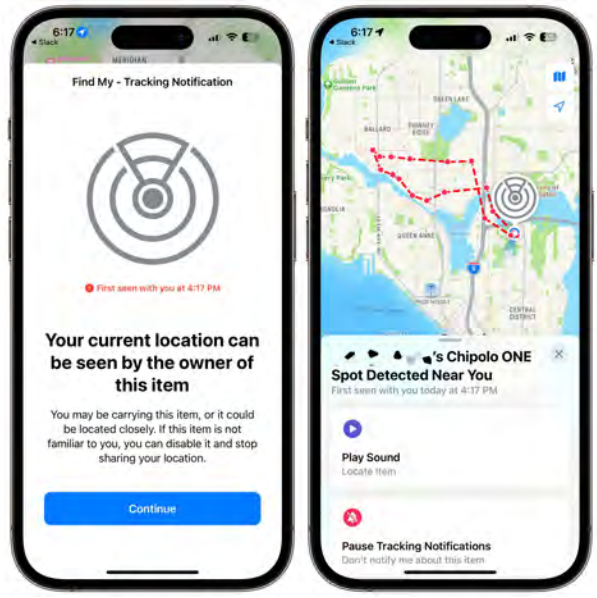
The spec largely matches Apple's implementation of anti-tracking elements in the Find My network, though the document contains more explicit detail about how this information must be encoded. In particular, the standard describes all the conditions in which a tracker is separated from the tracker's owner, as defined as a device in the iCloud set for a

single Apple ID connected to the iPhone or iPad with which an AirTag or Find My item was initially paired.

Apple's initial AirTag capabilities didn't account for all the ways in which unwanted tracking could occur and allowed various opportunities in which a determined party could keep tabs on someone without their knowledge. After some furor (see "Apple Explains How It Will Address AirTag Privacy Issues," 12 February 2022), Apple made a few tweaks that were considered improvements by groups that help victims of domestic violence and other kinds of stalking, such as the National Network to End Domestic Violence. However, Apple's changes weren't sufficient for these and other organizations advocating for personal privacy.

The protections Apple currently offers are:

- If you have an iPhone or iPad that's consistently relaying information about a nearby Find My item that moves with it, your device will display an alert and provide information about how you can cause it to play a sound; you can use Precision Finding to locate it if it's an AirTag and you have an iPhone with an ultra-wideband radio. Once found, you can bring it near an iPhone or Android phone with NFC to reveal limited details about the owner and get instructions on how to turn it off or remove its battery.



- If a Find My item is separated from its owner and moved, it makes a loud noise. To avoid letting a stalker predict when the sound might be made, Apple picks a random interval between 8 and 24 hours before it first makes a noise. (If the tracker remains fixed in place, it remains silent because the owner would have had to be near when it was put there—though that means the owner might then know the item hadn't moved.)
- Apple doesn't provide movement alerts. You can check an AirTag at any time through a native Find My app (not via the iCloud.com site), but you are never alerted to movement. This frustrates some people who want Find My to work like a movement detector that would alert you if your car or bike were in the process of being stolen.

(You can read more about these protections in "When You're Told an AirTag Is Moving with You" (4 June 2021); about AirTag use cases in "13 AirTag Tracking Scenarios" (13 May 2021); and some early, seemingly overstated panic about AirTags in "AirTags: Hidden Stalking Menace or Latest Overblown Urban Myth?" (11 January 2022). I've also written an entire book on AirTags and the Find My app and ecosystem, *Take Control of Find My and AirTags*.)

The most significant gap in those protections afflicts non-Apple users, who would only find out if a tracker moved with them when it played a sound. And it's possible to remove the sound-generating part of an AirTag using instructions easily found online.

An Android owner could install Apple's Tracker Detect app, but they must manually use it to identify a Find My item traveling with them. Likewise, those using trackers from other companies, currently more limited in reach, must have a compatible app or hardware. (When AirTags were launched, Tile offered no method by which people could become aware of nearby Tile trackers; the company added the feature in March 2022.)

The Apple/Google proposal aims to counter this lack of discoverability. Its goal is to make all platforms and tracking devices compatible with

each other for the purposes of discovery. As long as you or anyone around is carrying an Apple or Android-based mobile device, all trackers should produce alerts about their presence and let you take action.

The draft standard defines minimum requirements for devices that, one hopes, will become branded and certified in some way. Failing that, reviewers will ostensibly call out devices that fail to conform. I know I will!

In general, the proposal is pushing capabilities that will let any hardware device that can detect any kind of tracker via Bluetooth detect all of them. It requires trackers to produce sound at least to a standard-defined loudness, a discoverer to be able to trigger that sound and have it play for at least 5 seconds, and all trackers to have a method to be disabled, even if it's more involved than removing a battery. For instance, a Chipolo CARD Spot, which has an integral battery, already offers such an alternate method for disabling the tracker: instructions tell you to hold a button on the card for 30 seconds until you hear it start beeping and then release the button after the tenth beep.

The standard also specifies that all items must incorporate serial numbers. During pairing, makers must offer a registry process that associates the serial number with the owner's phone number and email address. However, the spec has no requirement for validating the number and address, a task seemingly left up to the device makers. The registry information remains in the hands of the maker unless requested by law enforcement. (Note the spec says "request," not "warrant" or another requirement with a higher burden of proof, providing a privacy and safety tradeoff for those who use these devices for legitimate purposes.) In any app that can detect standard trackers, a person finding it will be able to view the serial number and small portions of the phone number and email address, such as *(***) ***-5555* and *b********@i*****.com*.

The spec explains why the phone number and email address should be displayed like this in straightforward terms:

In many circumstances when unwanted tracking occurs, the individual being tracked knows the owner of the location-tracker. By allowing the retrieval of an obfuscated email or phone number when in possession of the accessory…this provides the potential victim with some level of information on the owner, while balancing the privacy of accessory owners in the arbitrary situations where they have separated from those accessories.

In other words, in circumstances that involve intimate partners, acquaintance stalking, and similar scenarios, the victim will likely be able to identify the perpetrator with a few digits or letters, making it easier to obtain legal, law enforcement, and court help.

I should note that Apple's other trackable devices—everything from the AirPods to a MacBook Pro—currently have fewer protections than Find My items: they don't bleep or bloop or send alerts in the above cases. This is likely because they're generally larger, much more expensive, and have short battery lives. Apple's AirPods and Beats earbuds are probably the smallest items that can be tracked via the Find My network, and they might be able to send tracking signals for only a few weeks. Go up in size to an iPhone, iPad, or Mac, and you're looking at battery life ranging from a few days to a week or two. In comparison, an AirTag and similar compact device can track for 6 to 12 months before its lithium-ion cell battery dies. The persistence and ease of hiding make the difference.

The draft proposal incorporates some of these bigger devices by dividing tracking into two categories: "small and not easily discoverable" (an AirTag or AirPods) and larger and "easily discoverable" (a bicycle or MacBook Pro). To fit into that latter category, a tracker's enclosing hardware must fit any of the following criteria:

- **One dimension:** Larger than about a foot (30 cm) in any dimension, like a cane with an embedded tracker

- **Two dimensions:** Larger than about 7 by 5 inches (18 by 13 cm), covering some iPads, but not any smartphones
- **Three dimensions:** Larger than about 15 cubic inches (250 cm^3) or with equal square faces a 2.5-inch cube—including the iPad Pro 11-inch and 12.9-inch models and any laptop

For devices that aren't easily discoverable, the document says best practices are required; for larger items, they're recommended but not required.

The draft omits any discussion of appropriate ways to share access to trackers among individuals. That could be mediated from the standpoint of avoiding stalking: consensual sharing doesn't decrease privacy and would allow something like a shared car or bike to be beneficially tracked by all who use it.

Parties that were previously highly critical of the AirTag protections responded extremely positively to the Apple/Google announcement. The National Network to End Domestic Violence and the Center for Democracy & Technology released a joint statement in which the CDT's head, Alexandra Reeve Givens, said, "A key element to reducing misuse is a universal, platform-level solution that is able to detect trackers made by different companies on the variety of smartphones that people use every day."

Apple and Google's press release stated, "Samsung, Tile, Chipolo, eufy Security, and Pebblebee have expressed support for the draft specification." However, only Pebblebee acknowledged the announcement, linking to it from its press page. Tile hasn't updated its press page since January 2022.

Because Apple and Google are backing this spec, it will likely reach fruition quickly. From what I can tell after reading the draft, some existing devices—almost certainly all AirTags—could be updated to be compliant through firmware updates. Other product lines will require new hardware.

Apple and Google could also add app store requirements for apps that work with physical tracking devices, requiring that the devices comply with these new guidelines. Apple already requires all third-party Find My items to conform with Apple's rules.

A broader adoption of interoperable, discoverable tracking standards could let society enjoy the benefits of tracking devices while reducing the likelihood of abuse—or at least making it far more likely that any antisocial uses are discovered quickly.

By Julio Ojeda-Zapata

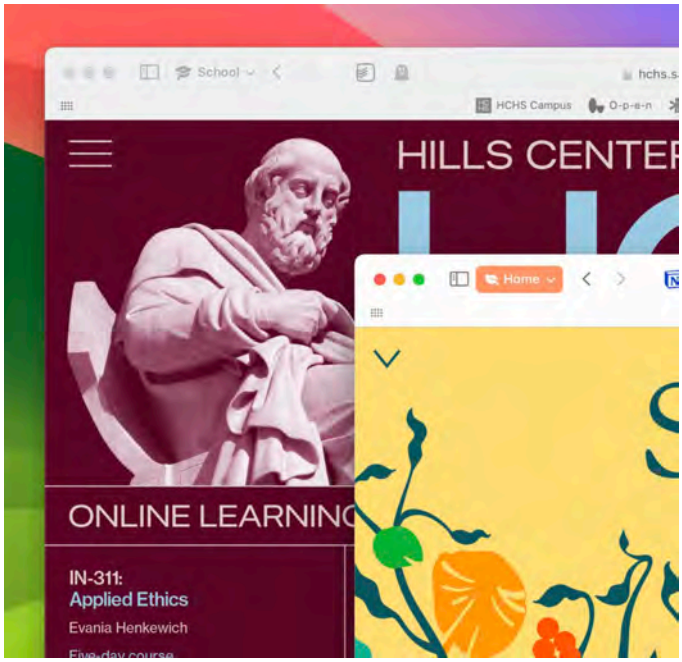
Another Dozen Compelling Features Coming to Apple's Operating Systems in 2023

When Apple reveals new versions of its various operating systems, it unleashes a torrent of feature announcements that have observers scrambling to keep up. It is therefore helpful to cherry-pick a handful or two that will have a significant impact. After watching Apple's 2023 WWDC keynote, Adam Engst adopted this approach in "12 Compelling Features Coming to Apple's Operating Systems in 2023" (5 June 2023).

I'm following up with my own list. I look at a half-dozen iOS 17, iPadOS 17, macOS 14, watchOS 10, and tvOS 17 features in a bit of detail and cite six additional ones in brief.

Safari Profiles

Profiles are a critical feature in Google Chrome, my current default Web browser, and in boutique browsers such as Arc (see "Arc Will Change the Way You Work on the Web," 1 May 2023). They allow me to partition my personal, day job, and freelance writer personas when using the Web, and shift among them as needed. Safari's lack of profile support is a big reason I have never fully embraced Apple's browser. Profiles are now coming to Safari in iOS 17, iPadOS 17, and Sonoma. They permit users to browse in a more organized way and to separate history, extensions, tab groups, cookies, and favorites. I'll need to see how Apple implements profiles before contemplating a switch, but I'm more excited about Safari than I have been in years. (Web apps are another reason for that.)



Find the Siri Remote

My wife, the main TV watcher in our household, continually loses track of our Siri Remote. That's partly because Apple never built Find My into the remote and partly because we decided not to use a third-party sleeve with an AirTag pocket (see "Two Siri Remote Sleeves That Incorporate AirTag Pockets," 22 July 2021). Something similar to Find My is now on the way. You'll be able to open the iPhone Control Center's virtual remote (which my wife refuses to use in place of the physical clicker) to start a hunt for the Siri Remote. It even provides an AirTag-like proximity indicator (though, reportedly, no swiveling arrow) so you know to keep looking under the couch cushions.

AirPods Adaptive Audio

Two big reasons to splurge on the second-generation AirPods Pro over the more affordable third-generation AirPods are Active Noise Cancellation (to filter out ambient noise) and Transparency Mode (to let ambient sounds in when being aware of your surroundings is critical). Until now, that has been an either-or proposition. Now, with a feature called Adaptive Audio, the AirPods Pro will dynamically blend or shift modes as you move among environments and interactions. Annoying background noise is filtered out when you're on a walk, for instance, but you'll hear a bicycle bell clear as, well, a bell. Similarly, a "conversation awareness" feature engages when you start speaking so that your music volume automatically lowers, background noise is reduced, and the two-year-old Conversation Boost feature kicks in (see "Ten Cool New Features Introduced at WWDC 2021," 7 June 2021). This is supposed to happen seamlessly—Adaptive Audio is an additional option in Settings alongside Noise

Cancellation and Transparency—so futzing should be minimal.

Group Password Sharing

I share passwords with my wife by giving her unfettered access to my BitWarden password manager with its hundreds of authentication entries. This is a great way to ensure she is never without an important password in an emergency, but some might prefer to engage in password sharing more selectively (as password managers typically allow). Apple already permits the quick sharing of a password or a passkey. With Safari in iOS 17, iPadOS 17, and Sonoma, it is building on this idea with the continual sharing of passwords among members of a trusted group. Settings stay current for everyone, and group members can be removed at any time.

iPhone StandBy

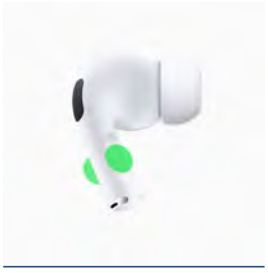
I have long disliked the near-uselessness of most iPhone screens when they are idle— while charging on a MagSafe stand, say. Android phones have Ambient Mode, which turns them into little smart displays that show bits of helpful information when the devices aren't in active use. In iOS 17, Apple is attempting something similar with StandBy, which transforms an iPhone into a smart display of a sort when charging in landscape mode. Customizable options include weather checks, photo browsing, setting of timers, use of Home controls, and the viewing of Live Activities such as food-delivery statuses and in-progress game scores. To use this feature effectively, you'll want a stand that holds the iPhone in landscape mode; Twelve South's Forté is one example (see "Seven Third-Party Accessories Show MagSafe's Potential," 4 June 2021).

Cycling Sensor Support

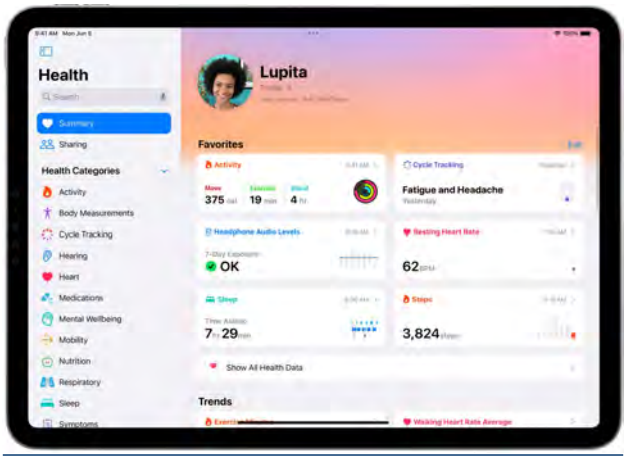
Nerdier cyclists often equip their bikes with Bluetooth sensors for measuring cadence, heart rate, power, and speed. I do this at home when using a stationary bicycle with the Zwift cycling simulator ("Zwift Transforms Stationary Bicycling into a Shared Virtual Experience," 1 July 2020). However, I have long wanted to cut the expensive Zwift out of the equation. Now, with watchOS 10, Apple is adding direct sensor support for those riding indoors and outdoors, as well as people using GymKit gear. Cyclists can add cadence and power to their Apple Watch metrics via corresponding sensors. They can also tap into a new "cycling power workout view" that blends power, heart rate, and motion data to provide useful information. I am left with a question: Will smart trainers (stationary bike stands with built-in sensors for Zwifting) be supported?

Six More Features, in Brief

- **AirPods press-to-mute:** Need to mute a phone call? Squeeze the stalk on third-generation AirPods and first- and second-generation AirPods Pro. On the AirPods Max, pressing the Digital Crown has the same effect.



- **Record a video message:** When someone you're calling isn't available on FaceTime, you'll finally have the option to record a video message, complete with features like Portrait Mode and Studio Light. You can leave an audio message, too. Just talk to the machine.
- **Health app on iPad:** The Health app's prolonged absence from the iPad and Mac made no sense. Apple is partially remedying this omission by bringing the Health app to iPadOS 17. Log symptoms, create med reminders, track menstrual cycles, it's all there. If it's so easy to port apps between Apple's platforms, what's keeping it off the Mac?



- **Crosswords in Apple News+:** Details on this feature are sparse, but I'm excited because I all but live in Apple's News app and devour its news headlines, magazine issues, and audio content. Puzzles will be a swell addition, but they're only for Apple News+ subscribers.
- **Grocery list sorting:** Navigating a vast supermarket is one of my toughest first-world problems. The Reminders app in iOS 17, iPad OS 17, and Sonoma will make it easier by sorting grocery items into categories for optimal grocery store triangulation. You can change how items are grouped, and your shopping list remembers your preferences.

More Features Yet

For a list of everything coming in 2023's operating systems—and Apple's descriptions of the features below—see:

- iOS 17
- iPadOS 17
- macOS 14 Sonoma
- watchOS 10
- tvOS 17

All these operating systems are now available in beta form for developers, will appear in public beta form for everyone soon enough, and should ship in the usual September/October time frame.

By Adam Engst

Beware of Siri Creating Alarms Instead of Timers

I regularly use timers on the Apple Watch to remind myself about cooking times, ensure I don't miss a meeting (see "A Call to Alarms: Why We Need Persistent Calendar and Reminder Notifications," 11 May 2023), track how long to hold or repeat various exercises, remember to move the laundry along, avoid overdoing it by splitting wood for too long, and much else. My command is always the same: "Set a timer for 20 minutes" or whatever length of time I desire.

A timer failing to go off can be a real problem. Food might burn, I might be late, or the people

performing a thoroughly evil core exercise with me might revolt. That's happened more frequently in the past few months, but I didn't know why until recently.

The first clue came when alarms started to go off on my Apple Watch every so often. That's unusual; I seldom set alarms, and when I do, it's always on my iPhone, not the Apple Watch. I didn't think too much about the spurious alarms, chalking them up to cosmic rays.

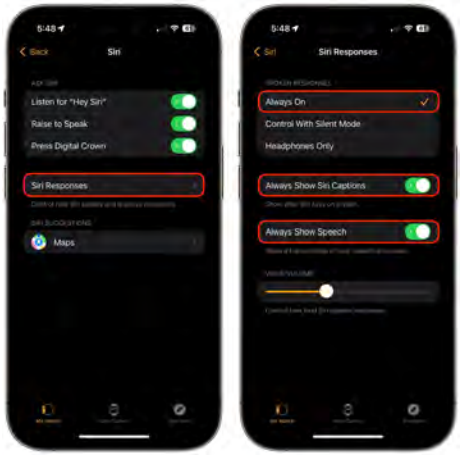
The explanation came from a blog post by my friend Paul Kafasis. Paul had noticed the same problem, but he realized what was happening because he was paying closer attention to Siri's visual feedback on the Apple Watch.

Something has recently changed with Siri such that it occasionally misses the final word—usually "minutes"—in the standard command, turning "Set a timer for 20 minutes" into "Set a timer for 20." I have become so accustomed to timers just working that I hadn't been looking at the screen like Paul had, so I didn't notice that Siri interprets that second command as a request to set an alarm for "20" (8 PM.) As you can see from the scrollbar in the third screenshot below, I've ended up with a slew of random alarms in the Apple Watch's Alarms app.

They're a little annoying to delete, too. You have to tap each one, scroll down, and tap Delete. I was hoping there would be a long swipe to the left, but I discovered an even better way, which was to tell Siri, "Delete all my alarms." Way to go nuclear, Siri.

Initially, the fix eluded me because the command is correct—Siri is just missing that final word for some reason. However, I discovered other ways to ensure that Siri sets a timer rather than starting an alarm:

- If you can retrain your brain to change your timer invocation command, rephrase it to move the unit to the middle, where it can't be missed. In other words, say, "Start a 20-minute timer" or even just "20-minute timer." Thanks to early commenters for this suggestion.
- Look at the watch face after you speak your command to confirm Siri's action. The screens for timers and alarms are visually distinct, so it's an easy difference to spot.
- Turn on Siri's spoken responses, captions, and the transcription of your speech in Watch > Siri > Siri Responses. I've never felt these were necessary before (and the responses grate quickly), but they should reduce the chance of missing Siri's mistakes.



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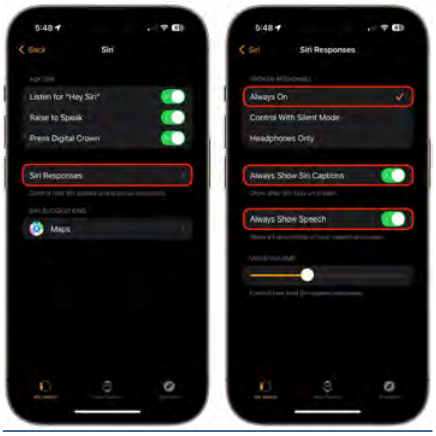

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