
Tips and Trends from ICJE

From ICJE, Inc. <jimrechel@icje.ccsend.com>
Date Tue 8/5/2025 10:34 PM
To Phillip Calvert <PCalvert@faulkner.edu>

Monthly News & Updates

July / August 2025

When Tomorrow Starts...Without Me

In just a few months, my dad will turn 92. His vision has slowly faded, and he now relies on his walker—not just for balance, but as a four-legged guide—to navigate the hallway from his apartment to the dining hall in the assisted living facility he reluctantly calls home.

My brothers and I have each offered to bring him into our homes, but he always declines. “I don’t want to be a burden,” he says. No matter how often we ask, he gently reminds us, “This is where I’ll spend my last tomorrow.” He refers to the dining hall with a wry smile as “God’s Waiting Room,” where each month, someone is called home. Though he’s made a few new acquaintances, five have passed away in just the last six months.

Through it all, he keeps his spirit. He puts on a brave face each day as he adjusts to life without the love of his life—his wife of 65 years—and a body that, as he puts it, has “let the old man in.”

Lately, he reflects more often on his past. He speaks with pride and gratitude about his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren—and the many friends he’s loved and lost. One friend, in particular, still comes up often: the buddy who enlisted with him in the Navy during the Korean War.

I share this because something unexpected happened the other day that was an experience very different than my father’s life.

I was on Facebook Marketplace, looking for a used jointer for a woodworking shop I hope to build someday. For now, the garage will have to do, and I was lucky enough to find one nearby.

But the transaction turned out to be much more emotional than I ever imagined.

The man I thought was the seller turned out to be a neighbor of the actual seller, as he was just helping facilitate the sale.

He told me the jointer belonged to a woman in her late 50s who had lost her husband to Covid—just months after he had purchased the jointer to outfit the workshop he built for his retirement in the coming years.

In early 2022, both she and her husband came down with Covid. As she was being taken to the hospital, her husband felt sick and told her he was heading to the doctor. That goodbye would be their last.

She was sent to a hospital in Batesville, Indiana. He ended up in one in Cincinnati. They were isolated, treated for weeks in separate facilities, without their children allowed to visit either parent. She survived—but with a long, difficult recovery. He did not.

While I was inspecting the jointer and working out delivery with the neighbor, my wife struck up a conversation with the widow outside the quiet barn that had once been her husband's dream. She shared that she was still grieving deeply and found it almost impossible to let go of anything that had belonged to late husband—especially in the workshop he had so lovingly built.

At that moment, the jointer wasn't just a tool anymore.

It was a thread connecting past and present, grief and healing. What began as a simple purchase turned into something far more meaningful: the start of a new relationship, and the chance to honor her late husband with a small project I hope to make for her—something crafted from the very tool he never got to use, in the shop that still holds his memory.

With all the tragedy in our nation, including the loss of life of one too many Alabama law enforcement officers this year, it is a reminder again, that tomorrow may start without us, and we should cherish every "today" that we have.

(As I am writing this the barbaric acts of child sex slaves held in a bunker in Brent is just breaking, and like so many horrific events, reveals the face of evil.)

Jim Rechel
ICJE Newsletter Editor
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Please feel free to email comments or suggestions anytime!

Thanks, Jim

Society News

Demopolis Smugglers Podcast

I recently discovered a very interesting podcast, focused on telling the behind-the-scenes stories of events from around the south. Most are related to crime stories, but they are not "who dunnits" but rather interesting profiles of the events and the people involved.

I listen to the podcast episodes while I'm on the road, and as I listened last week the narrator began telling the story of longtime Florida buddies who bought land outside Demopolis in order to fly drugs into Alabama, then truck it back to Florida for distribution.

As the story continued, the narrator began describing the beginning of the drug rings downfall began when their twin engine plane bringing in 600 kilos of cocaine crashed as it approached the Demopolis airport around 4am. The pilot and co-pilot both died in the fiery crash just outside the fence line of the airport property.

The pilot was thrown from the wreckage and clearly began crawling away before the flames consumed him. His brother, the co-pilot died in the burned-out fuselage of the plane. The

cocaine previously inside the plane was scattered everywhere, and much of it survived the inferno.

As I listened to the narrator, I recalled every detail as if it was yesterday, as I and Lou Harris were called to the scene after chemical workers ending their overnight shift came upon the wreckage as they were driving home. The DEA led the investigation, which ultimately was solved two years later when the same crew was spotted flying into Vaiden Field outside Marion, when Marion PD units sped down the runway to intercept the smugglers as they roared at the down the runway, in a game of high stakes chicken. The plane won, but its flight was traced to north Alabama where the pilots were arrested.

If you're interested in Alabama history, and the back story of those involved in the prosecution, later prison escapes, and more its a great 2 part story.

S4|E26: Once Smugglers | Part 1

Dickie Lynne and Ricou DeShaw are best friends, spending their youth navigating the labyrinthine creeks and waterways of the Florida Keys. But as both men stru

[Podcast Link](#)

Technology

Cell Site Analysis

1. Understanding Cell Tower Data

Cell tower data refers to the records generated when mobile phones communicate with nearby cellular towers. Each tower is composed of one or more sectors, usually covering 120-degree slices (three sectors per tower), and each connection generates a time-stamped log.

Key types of tower-related data include:

- Call Detail Records (CDRs) – Include time, date, call duration, dialed numbers, and the tower(s) used.
- Tower Dumps – A list of all devices that connected to a specific tower (or sector) during a particular time window.
- Historical Cell Site Location Information (CSLI) – Shows which towers a device connected to over time.
- Real-Time Location Data (Ping Data) – Provides current or recent location of a device, often obtained with a warrant.

2. Legal Process for Obtaining Tower Data

Investigators must ensure lawful access to data under the Fourth Amendment and applicable state and federal laws:

- Court Orders and Search Warrants – A search warrant supported by probable cause is required for historical CSLI (per *Carpenter v. United States*, 2018).
- Emergency Disclosures – In exigent situations (e.g., kidnappings, threats to life), providers may voluntarily share data under 18 U.S.C. § 2702.
- Tower Dump Warrants – Require particularity in describing the scope and justification, ideally with narrow time frames and geographic bounds

3. Tower Dump Analysis to Identify Unknown Suspects

Tower dumps are especially useful when the suspect is unknown. Investigators analyze the data to identify common numbers across:

- Multiple locations (crime scene, getaway routes, etc.)
- Multiple time periods (before, during, and after the crime)

Process:

1. Collect tower dumps from cell sites near the crime scene during the time window of interest.
2. Filter devices that appear consistently across multiple towers tied to the crime.
3. Cross-reference phone numbers with subscriber information (via subpoena or warrant).
4. Investigate behavioral patterns, such as movement trends, call habits, and location overlap with victim(s) or accomplices.

Tools such as Cellebrite Pathfinder, PenLink, and GeoTime can automate and visualize these comparisons.

4. Geo-Fencing Warrants (Reverse Location Searches)

Geo-fencing warrants request anonymized location data from providers like Google for all devices in a defined geographic area during a specific timeframe.

Three-step process:

1. Providers deliver anonymized device identifiers in the area/time window.
2. Investigators narrow down devices of interest.
3. A second request obtains identifying information for selected devices.

Legal note: These warrants are under increasing judicial scrutiny. Investigators must demonstrate probable cause, minimize overbreadth, and explain investigative necessity.

5. Mapping and Analysis

After identifying a suspect device:

- Overlay tower locations and coverage areas with incident maps.
- Create movement timelines using sequential tower connections.
- Compare to known witness reports, surveillance footage, and license plate readers.

Investigators may plot data in GIS software, use commercial tools like ArcGIS, or request carrier-provided heat maps of coverage areas.

6. Corroboration and Supplemental Evidence

Tower data should be corroborated with other evidence to strengthen probable cause:

- Surveillance video showing phone in suspect's hand
- Social media posts with location tags
- Eyewitness placing suspect at the location
- Data from other devices or accounts (e.g., Fitbit, vehicle telematics)

7. Best Practices and Considerations

- Preservation letters should be sent immediately to mobile providers to retain volatile data.
- Use narrow, well-justified timeframes for all requests to avoid legal challenges.
- Maintain a clear chain of custody and documentation for all data obtained.
- Be cautious of coverage overlap and tower handoffs—tower connection doesn't always mean proximity.
- Understand that location data is probabilistic, not precise; it's strongest when part of a totality of evidence.

8. Conclusion

Cell tower data is a powerful investigative tool when applied methodically and lawfully. By combining technical analysis with traditional investigative work, law enforcement can leverage this digital footprint to identify, locate, and prosecute criminal suspects more effectively.

As technology and legal standards evolve, investigators must stay current with both investigative tools and privacy considerations to ensure admissible, ethical, and effective use of cell phone tower data.

For training resources or assistance with forensic mapping and analysis, contact your regional fusion center, FBI CART, or local digital forensics task force.

CRIMINAL DEFENSE TECH TIDBIT - Challenging Historical Cell Site Analysis - Garrett Discovery

Challenging Historical Cell Site Analysis If you've encountered a map generated by a law enforcement official depicting cell tower coverage with a

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"I Want to be a Better"... at Critical Thinking

4 tips for developing critical thinking skills | Steve Pearlman, Ph.D. | TEDxCapeMay

"Critical thinking" increasingly stands as the most sought-after skill that has long been too fleeting to define. Employers rate it as a pinnacle skill, but one of which

they see too little, and educators claim to teach it, but over half of Millennials recently failed a simple Minedge critical thinking test.

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Investigative Decision Making and Its Association With Critical Thinking Skills, Thinking Styles, and Law Enforcement Experience

Decision making is an important aspect of the investigative work performed by law enforcement officers. The processes involved, though, including the collection, interpretation, and use of evidence, can be influenced by biases in thinking and reasoning such as confirmation bias.

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Crime

Bank Deploys Army of 10,000 AI Bots To Foil Scammers

Australians have lost \$150 million to scammers so far this year, and at least one bank is fighting back in a very unusual way. They're using AI in a very big way. An Army Of 10,000 AI Bots Take On Scammers In Realtime Commonwealth Bank is deploying an army of fake AI bots to waste [...]

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Scammers Unleash Flood of Slick Online Gaming Sites

Fraudsters are flooding Discord and other social media platforms with ads for hundreds of polished online gaming and wagering websites that lure people with free credits and eventually abscond with any cryptocurrency funds deposited by players.

Here's a closer look at the social engineering tactics and remarkable traits of this sprawling network of more than 1,200 scam sites.

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2025- ICJE Training and Education

Training Schedule

For more information on the 2025 schedule, please visit our website by clicking on "Read More":

[Read More](#)

Wednesday, August 27

37th Annual Alabama Statewide LECC Training

The Institute for Criminal Justice Education and Alabama LECC committees invite law enforcement to attend this year's LECC event.

37th Annual Alabama Statewide LECC Training

Eventbrite - Institute for Criminal Justice Education (ICJE) presents 37th Annual Alabama Statewide LECC Training - Wednesday, August 27, 2025 | Friday, August 29, 2025 at Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, AL. Find event and ticket information.

[Read More](#)

One More Thing

If Tomorrow Starts Without Me (read by Tom O'Bedlam)

"If Tomorrow Starts Without Me" attributed to David Romano and read by Tom O'Bedlam. Song by Mattia Cupelli - <https://soundcloud.com/mattiacupelli> No copyright intended.

[Link to Video / Poem](#)

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