


[Pay bills for FREE!](#)
[Yahoo! Bill Pay](#)



[Home](#) [Top Stories](#) [Business](#) [Tech](#) [Politics](#) [World](#) [Local](#) [Entertainment](#) [Sports](#) [Op/Ed](#) [Science](#) [Health](#) [Full Coverage](#)

Technology - ZDNet - updated 11:14 AM ET May 23

 Add to My Yahoo!

[Reuters](#) | [CNET](#) | [Internet Report](#) | [ZDNet](#) | [The New York Times](#) | [NewsFactor](#) | [MacCentral](#) | [More ...](#)

Friday May 18 12:14 PM EDT

How the government will track you down

By Paul Somerson, [Small Business Advisor](#)

Be afraid. Be very afraid. The government wants to use technology to track you down without a warrant. Do you trust these clowns?



Other resources from ZD Net
www.zdnet.com

- [Special FREE Software](#)
- [Download MP3 music](#)
- [Software Quick Start Guides for Beginners](#)

COMMENTARY--We've all seen films where someone tags bears with radio transmitters. Or slaps beepers under cars to follow them without being spotted. Or inserts gizmos through Arnold Schwarzenegger's nose or Keanu Reeves's belly button in sci-fi flicks so the bad guys can track every movement the hero makes. Well get ready, because they're about to make a real movie like this, and you're the star.

Over 300 million people worldwide carry cell phones. Most of these devices are always on to receive calls. Service providers today can use triangulation

or RF multipath "fingerprinting" techniques to locate you within "a few thousand square feet, or up to six square miles in rural areas," according to Bell Labs.

But the noose is tightening. Part of the 1996 Telecommunications Act mandated Enhanced 911 that would force carriers to be able to locate all callers by October 2001. And newer FCC ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) rules require greater precision—164 feet for GPS-based phones, 328 feet for network-based triangulation.

The government says that this would help them respond better to the 30 million emergency calls made each year from wireless devices, many of which are made by incoherent or lost callers.

Location-based services (LBS) actually do sound very useful. GPS chips in phones and small tracking devices could locate kids, pets, stolen items, package or pizza deliveries, truck fleets, and anything else that moves. Even edgier are advanced "trigger-mode" services. You could load your whole phone book into a cell phone and have it alert you when a friend or family member happens to be nearby. You could tell your phone you wanted a new Armani suit on sale and have the phone beep if you went past a store with one in your size at your price. Your phone could become a matchmaker at a trade show if you needed 10,000 purple widgets and someone across the hall had them in stock. Or it could find you a date or a mate, like an advanced version of Japan's "lovegetties." Some analysts predict LBS will be a \$20 billion business by 2005.

But there's a darker side. Several government agencies are claiming that the 1994 Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act lets them use this technology to track you legally, without a warrant or even probable cause, in what it deems "emergencies." Do you trust these clowns?

And do you trust others who can get their slimy hands on this data? The highway patrol will know you're

ADVERTISEMENT



#1 overall credit card on the Internet
GOMEZ ADVISORS

NextCard®
Visa®

VISA

0% APR IS NOT FOR EVERYONE.

[CLICK HERE](#)

VISA




traveling at 66mph and be able to pinpoint your location. Ugly gold-digging divorce cases will get even uglier as each side subpoenas logs of all addresses a spouse visited for years. Bosses or the IRS will know how long you stayed away from your desk, or map your precise whereabouts during road trips. Is this what we want?

Service providers balked at the October 2001 deadline, whining that they needed more time to pass on all the costs to the public and wriggle out of any liability issues. The FCC agreed to phase in adoption, moving the deadline for total implementation to the end of 2005. It's coming. And since we can't be without our phones, pucker up and kiss your freedom of movement goodbye. Trust me.

Paul Somerson is a contributing editor at *Ziff Davis Smart Business*.

[Email this story](#) - [View most popular](#) | [Printer-friendly format](#)

Archived Stories by Date:

News Resources
 **Message Boards:** [Post/Read Msgs](#) (60 msg May 21, 5:31 AM ET)
 **Conversations:** [Start](#) a live discussion
 **News Alerts:** [FCC](#)
More Alerts: [News Bulletins](#), [News](#), [Mobile](#), [Stocks](#)

Search News

[Advanced](#)

Search: [Stories](#) [Photos](#) [Full Coverage](#)

[Home](#) [Top Stories](#) [Business](#) [Tech](#) [Politics](#) [World](#) [Local](#) [Entertainment](#) [Sports](#) [Op/Ed](#) [Science](#) [Health](#) [Full Coverage](#)

Copyright © 2001 Yahoo! Inc., and ZD Inc. All Rights Reserved.

ZDNet and ZDNet logo are registered trademarks of ZD Inc. Content originally published in Ziff Davis Media publications is the copyrighted property of Ziff Davis Media.

[Questions or Comments](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) - [Terms of Service](#)