

IS THIS A LIFE OR DEATH EMERGENCY?

YES!

NO!

Follow procedures under SPD manual section 6.140 – Locating a Cell Phone during an Emergency
http://www.seattle.gov/police/publications/manual/06_140_locating_cell_phone_during_emergency.html

The victim may have reported the phone stolen to his or her provider, however history has shown that people have been able to get "blacklisted" phones working, so you should proceed even if it is reported stolen.

IS THE MISSING PHONE A SMARTPHONE THAT CAN BE TRACKED ONLINE?

YES!

NO!

Have the victim go online and log into his or her account at the appropriate web site:
Android (Galaxy, Droid, etc.)
google.com/android/devicemanager
iOS (Apple iPhone)
icloud.com
Windows Phone (Nokia)
windowsphone.com
Keep in mind that if you want the phone company to give you information directly, generally you need a court order.

Do you know the victim's cell service provider (i.e AT&T/Verizon/T-Mobile)?

YES!

NO!

CAN YOU LOCATE THE PHONE VIA GPS?

YES!

NO!

Use the Number Portability Check by calling 571-434-5781 code 19162877

Go look for the phone and associated thief! Keep in mind that you will need to evaluate your need for a warrant as the search progresses--for example, if you believe that the device is in a residence.

Have your victim sign a Consent to Search form (form 9.54) as the carriers may require written permission from the account holder.
Call the victim's service provider and ask:
1) Has the victim's phone been used since was stolen?
&
2) What's the phone IMEI (International Mobile Station Equipment Identity) ?
Find carrier contact info here:
<http://www.search.org/programs/hightech/isp/>
The phone's number may have been changed since it was stolen, but the IMEI will remain the same. For technical reasons, it is easier to keep a phone on the same network, so always check with the victim's phone company first.

IS THE PHONE BEING USED ON THE VICTIM'S NETWORK WITH THE VICTIM'S PHONE NUMBER?

YES!

NO!

You will then need to check other networks, one at a time, by process of elimination.
Determine the network capability of the victim's phone--CDMA, GSM, or World. This can be accomplished by asking the victim's service provider or doing an internet search of the model number of the phone.
93% of cell phones run on a Big 4 Network (Verizon, AT&T, Sprint and T-Mobile) so it is only feasible to check these companies. Verizon and Sprint use CDMA phones.
AT&T and T-Mobile use GSM phones.
World phones work on any network. Notable examples are the iPhone 4S and later. Also the flagship phones (i.e. most expensive) from the Android manufacturers generally are world phones.

BASIC CONCEPTS
1. The motive for the theft of a cell phone usually is economic, therefore it is likely that it will be sold.
2. If someone pays money for a phone they are going to use it.
3. If a phone is being used on a cellular network, it can be tracked.
4. Sophisticated criminals are able to outwit these techniques by changing the phone's IMEI or shipping it overseas, but most criminals are not sophisticated.

THE BIG 4 CONTACT INFO
Verizon Wireless Legal Compliance
180 Washington Valley Road
Bedminster, NY 07921
Phone: 800-4515242
Fax: 888-667-0028
AT&T Wireless
3 ATT Plaza
308 South Akard ST
Dallas, TX 75202
Phone: 800-291-4952
Fax: 877-9716093
Sprint/Nextel Communications, Inc.
6480 Sprint Pkwy
Overland Park, KS 66251
Phone: 800-8777330
Fax: 816-600-3111
T-Mobile
4 Sylvan Way
Parsippany, NJ 07054
Phone: 973-292-8911
Fax: 973-292-8697
LERinbound@t-mobile.net

The provider may require a search warrant for this info, but legally the victim can allow the phone company to give the police historic location information on his or her phone as long as the account is still in his or her name.

DID YOU FIND THE MISSING CELL PHONE BEING USED ON A NETWORK?

YES!

NO!

Draft a search warrant for the information on the subscriber (to include geo location information) who is using the victim's phone as identified by its IMEI. Find the carrier information here:
<http://www.search.org/programs/hightech/isp/>

You have exhausted this investigative strategy. However, the phone could be activated on a compatible network at any time in the future. Ask the carriers to notify you if this occurs.

IS THE CELL PHONE BEING USED BY SOMEONE YOU CAN LOCATE? (Likely someone who unwittingly purchased a stolen phone and has an account in her or her real name with a service provider?)

YES!

NO!

Interview the person in possession of the phone and take a detailed statement regarding how it came into his or her possession. Place the phone in Evidence.

Contact the King County Prosecutor Special Operations Unit to discuss obtaining a court order to allow you to track the stolen phone using a pen register:
PAOSpecOps@kingcounty.gov
206-296-3000
Note that this technique can be expensive.

HOW TO...
FIND A STOLEN CELL PHONE

(EVEN AFTER IT IS WIPED AND ISSUED A NEW NUMBER!)

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