

Telematics – five things you need to know

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About vehicle telematics and using data in investigations

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1. Vehicle telematics describes a vehicle's onboard communication services and applications, which communicate with one another via Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers and other telematics devices.

Vehicles hold a vast amount of data, including:

- the vehicle's movements
- the functions of the vehicle (for example, braking, accelerating, speed, doors opening and closing)
- devices attaching to the vehicle by Bluetooth or USB
- various other data sets

2. Think of a car as a computer on wheels or a digital witness. Almost everything it does is recorded. When a lot of things happen at once, the car will choose which information is more important to save. A lot of valuable information can be harvested from vehicles.

3. All vehicles are different. Some give track points and breadcrumb tracks. Some give call logs and Wi-Fi service set identifier (SSID) information.

4. If you jump into a car, connect to Bluetooth, start the engine and pick up a friend, the following pieces of intelligence could be detected via telematics:

- driver door opened and closed
- iPhone connected (plus possible contacts)
- ignition on
- possible track logs and route
- vehicle and wheel speeds
- vehicle stops (location)
- calls logs

- passenger door opened and closed

5. Be aware that vehicles overwrite data. If you think telematics may be useful in an investigation, reduce your interactions – for example, how often you open and close the door. Disconnect the battery and make a note of everything you have done.

Every force will have their own policies for when telematics can be used, so always seek the advice of a digital media investigator or your telematics single point of contact.

- This article was peer reviewed by Sergeant Steven Lefebvre, Kent Police.

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