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Man Drives 6,000 Miles to Prove Uncle Sam's Cellphone Coverage Maps are Wrong

posted by [mrpg](#) on Friday January 18, @10:34AM
from the [in-six-weeks dept.](#)

[upstart](#) writes:

Submitted via IRC for Byttram

Man drives 6,000 miles to prove Uncle Sam's cellphone coverage maps are wrong – and, boy, did he manage it

A Vermont state employee drove 6,000 miles in six weeks to prove that the cellular coverage maps from the US government suck – and was wildly successful.

In fact not only did he prove conclusively that reports delivered to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) by mobile operators [aren't worth the paper they're printed on](#) but also swung a spotlight on just how bad bureaucracy can get when it comes to Washington DC.

Corey Chase, a telecommunications infrastructure specialist who works for the Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD), undertook the [monster road trip](#) with some specialized equipment: six phones, each connected to a different mobile network, and a custom piece of software, G-NetTrack, that carried out constant measurements of download speeds.

[Original Submission](#)

(1)

Comment Below Threshold (1 child)

23454354 (Score: -1, Redundant) by [Ethanol-fueled](#) on Friday January 18, @10:44AM (1 child)

by [Ethanol-fueled \(2792\)](#) ★ on Friday January 18, @10:44AM ([#788194](#)) [Homepage](#)

FaGOOT BASTARDS

Comment Below Threshold

Re:23454354 (Score: -1, Offtopic) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @11:52AM

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @11:52AM ([#788203](#))

duuuuuuude
take yer meds

you're turning into a mdc

TL;DR (Score: 0) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @11:13AM (3 children)

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @11:13AM ([#788195](#))

government reply:

"Government is shutdown. Please repeat your experiment when FCC actually is operational and can accept complaints. Until then, we really don't give a %\$#@"

Re:TL;DR (Score: 2) by [Freeman](#) on Friday January 18, @04:08PM (1 child)

by [Freeman \(732\)](#) on Friday January 18, @04:08PM ([#788277](#)) [Journal](#)

Wait, the current FCC actually cares about outside opinions/comments/complaints? And the people complaining aren't Lobbyists? The whole Net Neutrality comment thing must have just been a big misunderstanding, then.

--
"I said in my haste, All men are liars." Psalm 116:11

Re:TL;DR (Score: 3, Interesting) by [Spamalope](#) on Friday January 18, @04:50PM

by [Spamalope \(5233\)](#) on Friday January 18, @04:50PM ([#788295](#)) [Homepage](#)

They understand that appearing to care, and providing a venue for folks to vent reduces the likelihood that they'll take effective action. They do care about stopping that.

Re:TL;DR (Score: 2) by [krishnoid](#) on Friday January 18, @07:55PM

by [krishnoid \(1156\)](#) on Friday January 18, @07:55PM ([#788387](#))

"In the meantime, we recommend you:

- provide an easily-consumed report of your findings,
- make sure all the news outlets know about this,
- request cell phone users who have had coverage problems to correlate their experience with your maps
- write up some petitions customized to state-specific lack-of-coverage maps
- request the users sign their names on a number of petitions, grouped by geographic area
- have a few follow-up petitions for good measure, and
- request the news outlets also plan for some follow-ups

You'll then be well prepared to thrash us properly and repeatedly once we open back up. Thank you for your correspondence."

crowdsourcing / distributed computing (Score: 3, Interesting) by [shortscreen](#) on Friday January 18, @11:18AM (8 children)

by [shortscreen \(2252\)](#) ★ on Friday January 18, @11:18AM ([#788197](#)) [Journal](#)

What if Vermont created one of those doohickies, you know, I think the kids call it an "app." People all over Vermont could run an app, it could check whether connection data pertaining to their location and service provider was needed for the survey, and it could run a test and then submit the result automatically. If everyone is running around with a tracking device anyway, then why not?

Re:crowdsourcing / distributed computing (Score: 2) by [The Mighty Buzzard](#) on Friday January 18, @12:26PM (3 children)

by [The Mighty Buzzard \(18\)](#) ★ <[themightybuzzard@soylentnews.org](#)> on Friday January 18, @12:26PM ([#788206](#)) [Homepage](#) [Journal](#)

Depends on if you're more worried about corporate interests using your info for marketing or what your government might do with constant, real-time location information on most every citizen I guess.

--
"Buzzy, you're probably the dumbest person I've ever encountered. Well, there is aristarchus, so make it 2nd dumbest."

Re:crowdsourcing / distributed computing (Score: 1, Interesting) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @03:01PM (2 children)

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @03:01PM ([#788244](#))

The phone company's cell system already has real time location and available bandwidth knowledge. They have the information to know the quality of their maps.

But this may be a game of how to extract funds without doing work. If so, then using what they know would be counter productive.

Vermont likely well understands the game and just wants a bigger share. Nicely played.

Re:crowdsourcing / distributed computing (Score: 2) by [bob_super](#) on Friday January 18, @06:08PM (1 child)

by [bob_super \(1357\)](#) on Friday January 18, @06:08PM ([#788328](#))

"Our measurements according to procedure #528b_159 v1.3.2 state that we provide the coverage advertised. We would be happy to discuss your measurements according to procedure #528b_159 v1.3.2, (which as a reminder uses profession equipment and high-grade antennas) rather than some custom hackjob using consumer-grade phones inside a car with an electric motor. Yours truly. The Cell carriers"

Re:crowdsourcing / distributed computing (Score: 0) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @10:53PM

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @10:53PM ([#788457](#))

Our measurements according to procedure #528b_159 v1.3.2...

Actually the FCC FAQ looks pretty simple.
<https://transition.fcc.gov/form477/477faqs.pdf> [fcc.gov]

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Q: Are there predefined coverage levels for the shapefiles?

A: There is no predefined dBm level associated with the mobile coverage maps. Instead, the coverage areas should reflect where customers can expect to receive service at the reported speeds/bandwidths for the particular technology and spectrum band.

Q: Should holes in wireless coverage areas that result from terrain blocking a signal be included in the deployment data?

A: The polygons representing mobile broadband or mobile voice network coverage should not include areas where terrain blocks a signal or other factors prevent service from being provided in that area.

Re:crowdsourcing / distributed computing (Score: 3, Interesting) by [esperto123](#) on Friday January 18, @03:48PM (2 children)

by [esperto123 \(4303\)](#) on Friday January 18, @03:48PM ([#788267](#))

I know you were being sarcastic, but there is an app called opensignal (at least in android) that collects data on cell quality and location to create a map of coverage, and you can manually do speed tests that I think are considered also. It gives you a heat map that you can select by type of network and network provider, can be very useful.

Re:crowdsourcing / distributed computing (Score: 3, Interesting) by [DavePolaschek](#) on Friday January 18, @04:47PM (1 child)

by [DavePolaschek \(6129\)](#) ★ on Friday January 18, @04:47PM ([#788292](#))

Yeah, OpenSignal exists on iOS too. But according to the reviews, it will only show you data for "All Carriers" rather than letting you see data per-carrier: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/opensignal-speed-test-maps/id598298030?mt=8> [apple.com]

It might do a great job of collecting data, but if it doesn't give me some benefit in return, I'm not going to install it.

Re:crowdsourcing / distributed computin (Score: 2) by [datapharmer](#) on Saturday January 19, @10:18AM

by [datapharmer \(2702\)](#) ★ on Saturday January 19, @10:18AM ([#788600](#))

You can actually toggle to a specific carrier or even technology. The maps are limited or inaccurate in some areas due to lack of use but you can fill them in pretty quickly. I posted results to twitter vs a Verizon map and a new tower was installed within 6 months or so after complaining to Verizon for years and being told essentially that they didn't care. Could be a coincidence but it felt like vindication (corporate account so couldn't just switch providers at the time). Running the speed test Andy posting results gets attention because even if the signal is technically fine there are still minimum bandwidth requirement (which in this case was the issue - 4 bars of amplified garbage but couldn't send a text or load a website)

Re:crowdsourcing / distributed computing (Score: 3, Touché) by [DeathMonkey](#) on Friday January 18, @06:42PM

by [DeathMonkey \(1380\)](#) on Friday January 18, @06:42PM ([#788356](#)) [Journal](#)

And then SN can run a story about it and we can all scream about what a privacy nightmare it is! I like it!

Author Rescinds GPL (Score: -1, Troll) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @11:22AM (5 children)

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @11:22AM ([#788198](#))

The author of the GPL licensed text-mode casino game "GPC-Slots 2" has rescinded the license from the "Geek feminist" collective. (<https://lkml.org/lkml/2019/1/17/52> [lkml.org]) (<https://slashdot.org/submission/9087542/author-recinds-gpl> [slashdot.org])

[Notice: the revocation of the "Geek Feminists"'s license /just/ occurred. 2019. January.]

The original author, after years of silence, notes that the "Geek Feminist" changed[1] a bunch of if-then statements which were preceded by a loop waiting for string input to a switch statement. The author reportedly noted that to use a switch statement in such an instance is no more performant than the if-then's. Switch statements should be used where the input to the switch statement is numerical, and of a successive nature, for premost efficient use of the jump table that is generated from said code.

The author reportedly was offended, after quiet observation of the group, that the "Geek Feminists" mocked his code, mocked his existence as a male, and never did any work on the code afterwards and never updated to include new slot machines added to the original code by author subsequently.

The author notes that he neither sought nor received any compensation for the granted license, that is was a gratuitous license, and that there never was any refutation of his default right to rescind given. (A right founded in the property law of licenses.)

The copyright owner has reportedly watched quietly as each year the "Geek Feminists" published a recount of their heroic efforts regarding his code. [2][3] Presumably he has now had enough of it all...

The author notes that the SF Conservancy attempts to construe a particular clause in the GPL version 2 license text as a "no revocation by grantor clause", however that clause states that if a licensee suffers and automatic revocation by operation of the license, that licensees down stream from him do not suffer the same fate. The author of "GPC-Slots 2" reportedly notes that said clause does only what it claims to do: clarifies that a downstream licensee, through no fault of his own, is not penalized by the automatic revocation suffered by a licensee he gained a "sub-license" from (for lack of a better term.)

The author reportedly notes that version 3 of the GPL did not exist when he published the code, additionally the author notes that even if there was a clause not to revoke, he was paid no consideration for such a forbearance of a legal right of his and thus said clause is not operative against him, the grantor, should it exist at all.

(Editor's note: GPL version 3 contains an explicit "no-revocation-by-grantor" clause, in addition to a term-of-years that the license is granted for. Both absent in version 2 of the GPL)

The author reportedly has mulled an option to register his copyright and then to seek damages from the "Geek Feminists" if they choose to violate his copyright post-hence.

(Editor's note: Statutory damages for willful copyright infringement can amount to \$150,000 plus attorney's fees for post registration violations of a differing nature to pre-registration violations.)

[1]<https://geekfeminism.org/2009/10/19/>
[2]<https://geekfeminism.org>
[3]<http://geekfeminism.wikia.com>

GPC-Slots 2 is a text console mode casino game available for linux with various slot machines, table games, and stock market tokens for the player to test his luck. For the unlucky there is a Russian Roulette function.

[Notice: the revocation of the "Geek Feminists"'s license /just/ occurred. 2019. January.]

Addendum: Statements from the program author:

"It's my right to rescind the permission I extended.
I have done so.

You speak as if me controlling my property is a criminal act.
And to you people, perhaps it is.

If the "geek feminists" wanted a secured interest, they would have to pay for one."

"I did rescind the license, yesterday"

>Reportedly
"I did rescind the license, yesterday

Not "reportedly" anymore."

"
>Then you should have used them.
Not necessary, the language used in the press release identifies them easily.

>should
As if I somehow can't just rescind using their names either.

License to use/modify/etc the GPC Slots 2 code is hereby terminated for: Alex "Skud" Bayley, and Leigh Honeywell.
(Note: this termination is not to be construed as a lifting of the previously issued termination regarding the "Geek Feminism collective", this termination is an addendum)
"

"
You will just keep saying that I cannot rescind permission to use my property.
And you are wrong.

I can and I HAVE_ (from the previously identified people). I have that power as the owner of the work. It is not YOUR work, it is not THE WORLD's property (I did _not_ dedicate it to the public domain), it is M I N E.

I know this very well. I am studied in the law. I know the bullshit defenses non-owners try to pull against owners (mostly equity "pleeas not fair judge" - usually when they don't like an increase in payments)

There is no K, I am not bound by the terms that I require people using my property to follow. If they do not follow the terms they are simply violating MY copyright and I sue for damages. If I decide I don't want them to use my property I can revoke permission at any time, then if they continue to use it: again they are violating MY copyright and I sue them for damages.
"

>p46 "As long as the project continues to honor the terms of the licenses under which it recieved contributions, the licenses continue in effect. There is one important caveat: Even a perpetual license can be revoked. See the discussion of bare licenses and contracts in Chapter 4"
--Lawrence Rosen

>p56 "A third problem with bare licenses is that they may be revocable by the licensor. Specifically, /a license not coupled with an interest may be revoked/. The term /interest/ in this context usually means the payment of some royalty or license fee, but there are other more complicated ways to satisfy the interest requirement. For example, a licensee can demonstrate that he or she has paid some consideration-a contract law term not found in copyright or patent law-in order to avoid revocation. Or a licensee may claim that he or she relied on the software licensed under an open source license and now is dependent upon that software, but in this contract law concept, called promissory estoppel, is both difficult to prove and unreliable in court tests. (The concepts of /consideration/ and /promissory estoppel/ are explained more fully in the next section.) Unless the courts allow us to apply these contract law principles to a license, we are faced with a bare license that is revocable."
--Lawrence Rosen

>p278 "Notice that in a copyright dispute over a bare license, the plaintiff will almost certainly be the copyright owner. If a licensee were foolish enough to sue to enforce the terms and conditions of the license, the licensor can simply revoke the bare license, thus ending the dispute. Remeber that a bare license in the absence of an interest is revocable."
--Lawrence Rosen

Lawrence Rosen - Open Source Licensing - Software Freedom and Intellectual property Law

>p55 "Of all the licenses described in this book, only the GPL makes the explicit point that it wants nothing of /acceptance/ of /consideration/:
>...
>The GPL authors intend that it not be treated as a contract. I will say much more about this license and these two provisions in Chapter 6. For now, I simply point out that the GPL licensors are in essentially the same situation as other open source licensors who cannot prove offer, acceptance, or consideration. There is no contract."
--Lawrence Rosen

>David McGowan, Professor of Law, University of Minnesota Law School:

>"Termination of rights

>[...] The most plausible assumption is that a developer who releases code under the GPL may terminate GPL rights, probably at will.

>[...] My point is not that termination is a great risk, it is that it is not recognized as a risk even though it is probably relevant to commercial end-users, accustomed to having contractual rights they can enforce themselves.

Discussions with author of program involved:
<http://8ch.net/tech/res/1013409.html> [8ch.net]
<http://8ch.net/tech/res/1017824.html> [8ch.net]
<http://8ch.net/tech/res/1018729.html> [8ch.net]

Re:Author Rescinds GPL (Score: 2) by [The Mighty Buzzard](#) on Friday January 18, @12:56PM (1 child)

by [The Mighty Buzzard \(18\)](#) ★ <[themightybuzzard@soylentnews.org](#)> on Friday January 18, @12:56PM ([#788216](#)) [Homepage](#) [Journal](#)

You remember last time when I told you it was your last warning about spamming? Well...

--
"Buzzy, you're probably the dumbest person I've ever encountered. Well, there is aristarchus, so make it 2nd dumbest."

Re:Author Rescinds GPL (Score: 2) by [Runaway1956](#) on Friday January 18, @03:38PM

by [Runaway1956 \(2926\)](#) ★ on Friday January 18, @03:38PM ([#788257](#)) [Journal](#)

Was that spam, or vegemite?

--
PTSD - Pretty Tired of Stupid Democrats

Re:Author Rescinds GPL (Score: 0) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @03:51PM (2 children)

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @03:51PM ([#788268](#))

GPC Slots 2

Wasn't this the MikeeUSA program with a bunch of hidden racist/misogynistic easter eggs in the code? LOL

Re:Author Rescinds GPL (Score: 2) by [Alfred](#) on Friday January 18, @04:08PM

by [Alfred \(4006\)](#) on Friday January 18, @04:08PM ([#788278](#)) [Journal](#)

Good grief did you actually read that mess?

Re:Author Rescinds GPL (Score: 0) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @06:01PM

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @06:01PM ([#788323](#))

We can understand MikeeUSA's ministry as reduced to three things: all forms of slavery that have the word "government" stamped on them are evil because men are not angels, all forms of slavery that have the word "contract" stamped on them are good because they are enforced by the infinite turtles upon which the Earth itself stands, and finally that women are, in fact, angels.

(Our inability to reconcile this with her ravings against the angelic sex only serves to demonstrate her incomprehensible genius!)

Therefore we should heed her clarion call: kill all men and implement the EMACS forthwith, immediately, posthaste, &c!

Lying is an art (Score: 2, Informative) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @12:32PM

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @12:32PM ([#788210](#))
Ask any MBA.

So why should we trust the FDA? (Score: 0) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @12:48PM

by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @12:48PM ([#788213](#))

Why should we trust results submitted to the FDA? Heck, for that matter, why should we trust anything the government tells us?

Been telling you that! (Score: 5, Insightful) by [Runaway1956](#) on Friday January 18, @03:42PM (2 children)

by [Runaway1956 \(2926\)](#) ★ on Friday January 18, @03:42PM ([#788262](#)) [Journal](#)

Rural people get jack shit for cellphone coverage. Don't believe the rural people? Find any truck driver. You don't exactly want the (in)famous coast-to-coast drivers, who haunt the interstate highways. I mean, they'll give you a decent picture of cellphone coverage. Ideally, get one of those household movers. They get into every two-horse town in America, and they take the scenic routes getting there. Get their opinion on coverage.

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PTSD - Pretty Tired of Stupid Democrats

- **Re:Been telling you that! (Score: 5, Informative) by [DavePolaschek](#) on Friday January 18, @04:55PM (1 child)**
by [DavePolaschek \(6129\)](#) ★ on Friday January 18, @04:55PM ([#788298](#))
I drive across the country a couple times a year (don't fly since the blue-gloved meanies took away my scissors one too many times).
T-Mobile says there's signal all over the western half of the country, but there's an awful lot of places where if you want data, you're "roaming" onto AT&T's network. Or getting Edge or GPRS if you pull more than a mile away from the interstates.
The story qualifies as news more because someone actually gathered the data. Shame that's newsworthy, but there it is.
 - **Re:Been telling you that! (Score: 0) by Anonymous Coward on Saturday January 19, @03:30AM**
by Anonymous Coward on Saturday January 19, @03:30AM ([#788536](#))
why do you have your scissors stored where the blue-glove testing is done?
- **Confirmed (Score: 5, Insightful) by [Phoenix666](#) on Friday January 18, @04:03PM**
by [Phoenix666 \(552\)](#) ★ on Friday January 18, @04:03PM ([#788274](#)) [Journal](#)
I am glad that the State of Vermont did this. I take a lot of roadtrips and have often thought the coverage was not what the cellphone company maps promised it to be. But it's anecdotal, etc., so I left it at that.
In this case it was a state government employee who undertook this project, but citizen gadflies ought to also. The government justifies a lot of its policies with data handed it by self-interested corporations, such that the outcome they want is assured. Rarely is that dynamic exposed by the corporate media.
--
Washington DC delenda est.
- **Link Text (Score: 0) by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @06:32PM**
by Anonymous Coward on Friday January 18, @06:32PM ([#788343](#))
Are relevant links just attached to random text in the summary, or is there some method to it?
- **Frivolous use of distance (Score: 0) by Anonymous Coward on Saturday January 19, @02:47AM**
by Anonymous Coward on Saturday January 19, @02:47AM ([#788524](#))
6000 miles wasted, that could have been put to good use, all to bite his thumb at the invisible fields in the sky, aren't the one's beside the road enough for him?

(1)

For large values of one, one equals two, for small values of two.