

## Maryland Tests Cell Phone Detection In Prison | [View Clip](#)

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***Eyewitness News at 5 PM - WJZ-TV***

Maryland corrections officials are conducting landmark tests on devices that could cut cell phones in prison.

CBS

A series of WJZ investigations exposed the dangerous problem of cell phones behind bars. Now, the state is taking critical new steps to detect contraband phones.

Mike Hellgren reports on the latest push to get the phones out of the hands of prisoners.

Several high-profile incidents brought the problem into the spotlight. Corrections officials around the country came to Maryland Thursday to test solutions.

WJZ's exclusive investigations revealed how inmates obtain cell phones, keep them and use them to run criminal empires on the outside.

"I was nervous. It took a couple days, but I wound up getting the phone. It worked, and I got a charger with it," said an inmate.

They've been used to kill. Patrick Byers was convicted in April of using a contraband phone to order the murder of witness Carl Lackl. "It was everybody's dirty little secret, and I don't think they ever thought that it would escalate to a murder," said Margaret Shipley, Carl Lackl's mother.

State corrections leaders have taken major steps to stop the problem, including cell phone sniffing dogs and body orifice scanners.

They've now conducted a landmark test of devices that can tell where phones are through the signals they send.

The device, developed by ITT of Columbia, detects the cell phones behind prison walls. They show up as dots on a map of the cell block.

Behind the cell walls at the old House of Correction, there is a sensor that actually does that job for Jessup's prison.

"When the sensor detects a call, it alerts the server. The server takes all the neighbor sensors and says everybody go and listen on that particular frequency. Then it takes measurements, feeds it to a server, runs it through a powerful set of algorithms we developed, which then predicts its location," said Terry Bittner, ITT Director of Security Products.

One thing it doesn't do is jam the phone altogether, which is currently against the law.

Several Maryland lawmakers are fighting to change that. The Secretary of Public Safety testified in the Senate.

"None of this will replace the jamming in my opinion. We still have to have that capability," said Gary Maynard. "It takes that series, combination of technology plus our alert staff and everything we can bring in detecting the cell phones involved in criminal activity."

Still, the detection devices, like the one in Jessup, are part of the solution to a dangerous problem behind bars. Cell phones can turn into deadly weapons.

"Ten in a prison is too many. It only takes one to negotiate that criminal activity," said Maynard.

The number of cell phones the Division of Correction confiscated continues to go up. About 1,000 cell phones were confiscated in prisons last year.

Meanwhile, Governor Martin O'Malley and Senator Barbara Mikulski issued a joint statement Thursday urging Congress to allow cell phone jamming.