

SPOT - Some ideas on how to use it;

Many of us have chosen to carry these handy beacons, but there are some questions about how to use them. There are 3 "Notification" buttons;

"911"

This button notifies SPOT of an emergency. They notify the local Search and Rescue Coordination Center in the geographical location of the signal. They also relay the message you have left for them to the people on your notification list.

"HELP"

This button notifies SPOT of a problem that is NOT life threatening. They will notify the people on your list of your location, the existence of a problem, and the message you have provided them.

"OK"

This button notifies SPOT of a routine "OK" situation which they relay to the people on your list along with your location.

So, how to take best advantage of this? Here is how I have mine set up;

1. In reverse order, my "OK" message goes to my wife and the responsible people I have selected. (These people have my wife's contact number and are more or less in routine contact with her anyway.) It is meant to provide reassurance of my good health and current progress.

I heard that issues have arisen for some people when the "loved one" became anxious when the daily "OK" message she was used to getting each night didn't show up at the expected time. That lady decided to notify the US Coast Guard who located the target anchored near the hot springs South of Juneau. (They might have been in a "Shadow"?) That is not a system failure, in my mind that is an operator problem.

2. "HELP", goes to the same people as my OK message, but this is the most complicated of the three situations., and most problematic My "HELP" message goes to my wife and people I trust who have agreed to receive the message, and are likely to get it and read it.

It states; "This IS NOT A LIFE THREATENING SITUATION, but I am unable to proceed and require appropriate assistance at the location that is shown....". When they get this message they will decide on a course of action knowing already that;

I have left a trip plan with them or my wife. (IE. flying to Dawson, boating the Yukon River, 4 wheeling behind Golden Horn etc...).

THEY KNOW I WOULD NOT ASK FOR HELP IF I COULD STILL TRAVEL!

In most cases this will be a mechanical issue....mechanical, fuel, flats, etc, They will evaluate my activity, and undertake to arrange someone using a 4 wheeler, boat, aircraft, helicopter etc.. capable of responding to the given location within a reasonable time (8-24 hours) If possible they will take food, fuel, or parts relevant to my activity.

3. "911", is actually less of an issue (notification wise) than the other two. When I press this button lives are in jeopardy, or likely to be soon. SPOT will notify the Yukon Emergency Measures Organization, and those people on my list. There is no cost issue here for me, and I have made it clear to those on my list.

If I am flying, my "911" message says;

"The owner of this SPOT flies aircraft registration CF-FFF. It is a Yellow and White Super Cub with a master flight plan on file at Nav Can Flight Services in Whitehorse Yukon (Phone 867-111-1111 to confirm this aircraft is in use). The aircraft is normally parked at 1111 Lodestar Lane. ELT ID is- _ _ _ _ _."

If I am traveling by different means than aircraft I usually change the message. But, If I forget, someone at FSS or at the airport, or the RCMP can quickly confirm whether or not my aircraft is safely parked in the hanger, and adjust the search accordingly.

So the only issue is who to place on your notification list? The messages go to e mail addresses, or text messages by phone. My wife goes on without argument.

A responsible person who knows me and my activities well, and understands SPOT system can be harder to find. Also, like most of us I am occasionally negligent with updating my call-out list. BUT, if the beacon is signaling, those on my list know I am out there.

If you have any suggestions let me know and all of us can benefit from your experience.