

By Craig
Nicholson



Reserve Your SPOT

Snowmobiling often takes us far from civilization and cell service. Every rider must consider what to do if something unexpected happens. Certainly, travelling with a group provides some peace of mind, but doesn't make getting outside assistance much easier or quicker, especially if it's life or death. A satellite phone may connect you to help, but won't pinpoint where you are, while a GPS unit will mark your coordinates, but not communicate with anyone. So unless you carry both technologies, you may be beat in a dire emergency.

Enter SPOT, already proven in commercial applications, including use by major emergency, relief and rescue agencies. The handheld SPOT comes in a durable, water resistant case designed to survive most impacts and submersions. It's well designed for its purpose and easy to use, albeit a little oversized for most pockets. SPOT is equipped with long-life lithium batteries; always carry a spare set and keep the batteries warm for peak efficiency.

SPOT has a GPS chip that tracks the unit's location. This GPS capability allows signal recipients and responders to receive your coordinates and check your whereabouts on Google Maps™. The SPOT unit does not have a display screen or other conventional GPS functions, nor is it able to receive incoming signals or communications. This means that SPOT

cannot reply to responder questions or explain the exact nature of your situation. There is also no indication for the sender that SPOT has acquired a GPS location or sent a message.

But as long as SPOT has unobstructed line of sight to the sky, the unit is a valuable lifeline to emergency responders in a critical emergency. After you push its Alert 911 button, SPOT will keep signalling the GEOS International Emergency Response Centre every five minutes, until you cancel or its batteries die. The Emergency Response Centre notifies appropriate emergency response or search and rescue teams based on your location and personal information – as well as notifying your personal emergency contact(s) about the receipt of your distress signal.

Two other buttons – HELP and OK – activate SPOT's other functions by beaming signals to satellites. For non-urgent assistance (and as back-up to Alert 911), push the HELP button. SPOT sends a user pre-programmed email or text message, plus GPS location, to the computers, cell phones or PDA's of any recipients you've pre-selected.

Pressing the OK button automatically enables a rider to check in at any time to reassure family and friends that all is well by sending a pre-programmed email, along with a Google Maps link, or a text message, to those you have pre-selected. To ensure that SPOT is functioning properly before



you leave home, it's a good idea to send and verify an OK/Check In message.

Although SPOT uses GPS technology to track your waypoints, you cannot use it like a conventional GPS for en route navigation. Instead, SPOT sends the waypoints to your private online account on the SPOT website, to be stored for later downloading to your GPS. From there, you can also download your SPOT waypoints from a computer to your GPS for later use if so desired. Best of all, your family can follow your progress on Google Maps! SPOT can be also used ATVing, boating, fishing, hunting...you can even get help if your automobile or trailer breaks anywhere! The SPOT web site has multiple profiles for entering different info for each of your activities. This user-friendly site also provides a share function that allows multiple people to view your stored information simultaneously.

If you travel away civilization, SPOT may be the best money you ever spent. Best of all, a new, smaller and more powerful version of SPOT is now available, with many improvements.

Warm Your Buns

Ski-Doo's heated seat stops a chill cold. I parked my butt on one last winter and stayed warm even in extreme weather. It fits easily over the original seat and operates from a three-position switch (off/high/low) installed in the dash. Be sure to mount this switch on the left side so you can adjust temperature easily while riding. Installation can be a little complicated, so have your dealer do it.

Like hand and thumb warmers, a heated seat does not put out instantly. But if you start with it on high, you will gradually feel its warmth percolate through the seat of your pants. Over a long day of riding, having your buns warmed helps your body maintain core heat more easily, and this in turn means less difficulty keeping your fingers and toes comfortable. So don't be a tough guy: no more freezing your buns off and score the ultimate brownie points by getting one for your wife or girlfriend too! Check it out at your local Ski-Doo dealer.

