Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum
Topic: : PLBs for Fishing Alone
Re: PLBs for Fishing Alone
Author: : salmonoid
Date: : 2013/7/12 11:20:46
URL:

Quote:

> wildtrout2 wrote:
> All cell phones have a "location setting" which needs to be turned on by the user. This supposedly can still give your location regardless of cell phone towers in the area? It works by giving "pings" as to your location. I really don't know how well this works, but this is what I have read. I do know my "location" option is set on my cell phone in the event it does work. lol

Just to clarify this - cell phones have to support E911 by default, which allows a phone to be located for emergency purposes. This is on by default, but only accessible by the "authorities", meaning there has to be some worthwhile event that has occurred for your location to be accessed by the carrier (i.e. a 911 phone call is made by your phone, or you've gone missing and law enforcement comes knocking on the carrier's door). As an aside, all cell phones, even inactive ones, have to be able to make basic 911 calls. You can grant permission to other numbers or services by enabling the location permissions on your phone.

With a traditional cell phone, there are only two real ways to locate you - radiolocation, which involves using a number of different methods to determine your distance and direction to one or more cell towers, or GPS location, which gets embedded in the location data sent to the tower. But both methods still require you to be able to hit a cell tower. If you are located in an area without coverage, that best information that will be available is the last tower you touched with information.

GPS coverage definitely works where towers are not present; however, it is a receive only technology on phones. It's helpful in the sense that one of the tenets of not getting lost is staying found, so it can help you know where you are. But it won't do you any good if you break a leg four miles in and are dozens of miles of away from a cell tower, even if you have all the apps in the world installed on your phone. You may know exactly where you are at with your broken leg, but you have absolutely no way to transmit that information from your phone.

That would be where a satellite based PLB system would come into play.

Location tracking on a cell phone CAN be useful; just know the contingencies that go into it and don't depend on it to be the primary way of letting someone know where you are at if you aren't in range of a tower.

Regarding the use of a smart phone app that interfaces with an external device, I'm not sure why one would pay

$120 to add another layer to helping one be found. Hopefully the external device works standalone and the smart phone app just adds another way of accessing it's functionality. The last thing I'd want to have happen is for my second phone battery to die in the woods on the third day of an unplanned overnight outing; meanwhile my battery pack that I carry for charging batteries got dunked in the stream when I took the tumble that broke my leg and put me in the predicament in the first place..

Regarding the notion that the old-timers (i.e. Daniel Boone and Lewis & Clark) didn't have this technology and they survived, that's definitely true. I think about this periodically - they didn't have Gore-Tex or hi-tech down gear and they managed to survive harsh downpours, cold winters, and boat/walk halfway across the continent. I marvel at what they did; I also have the cognitive ability to recognize that we have tools available to us now that they did not, and there are good situations to apply the use of those tools. They took risks that they could not mitigate. We have the same risks; we just have more tools to mitigate them. If you want to take higher risks, go for it (but be prepared to pay the SAR bill).

I've researched PLB on and off over the past few years but never pulled the trigger on one. I do periodically go fishing/overnight backpacking alone, which does cause my wife to worry. She either just deals with it (not good), relies on Google Latitude to know my whereabouts (better for general location, as I put the phone in airplane mode when hardcore fishing, and I like to fish in areas that don't have cell service, AND Google is discontinuing this service August 9), or I take someone with me. As I get older (and wiser?), for her peace of mind and for my own safety, and knowing that the risk of physical injury goes up with my age, most likely, I'll probably pull the trigger on a PLB. Or just downgrade to day-trips.