



What you need to know about Spot®, inReach® and Rescue!

I have carried a Spot® Satellite Messenger for almost 7 years now and until this summer it was just a precautionary device. It was mainly to reassure my wife that I was safe in the backcountry while I was hunting or on projects with my local Back Country Horsemen chapter.

When I purchased and activated my Spot® for the first time I opted for the GEOS Search and Rescue feature. GEOS provides S.O.S. monitoring and emergency dispatch through the dedicated International Emergency Rescue Coordination Centre (IERCC) based in Houston, TX. This added service provides a GEOS Member Benefit for reimbursement of up to \$100K in Search and Rescue (SAR) expenses – even coordinating a private SAR contractor if needed to get you to safety. The GEOS Member Benefit was only \$17.95 per year, a bargain at any price.

What I didn't fully realize was that subscription/membership only covers me. Not any of my family, my grandson (who accompanied me in the backcountry every summer since 2014) or my wife. **What I recently found out is you can add any and all family members, or friends that might be coming along for an additional \$17.95 per year.** If I would have known this I would have signed them up for that nominal charge.

The GEOS Membership is not an insurance policy it is a “pre-paid” service that allows you to draw from the pot, up to \$100K for your Search and or Rescue. But there is a catch; GEOS services **must dispatch your rescue**. This means that if someone else dispatches A.L.E.R.T or any other helicopter extraction or dispatches a local Search and Rescue Team **you will not be covered**.

I know all of this because on July 5, 2018 I had an unexpected dismount on the way out of the Great Bear Wilderness packing out supplies for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation. When I came to my senses my left arm wouldn't work and my right leg wouldn't work. I was able to get back to the trail and was helped to the top of the ridge by my fellow packer John Peine.

Long story short after some deliberation I decided that the only way for me to get home safely was to call the local A.L.E.R.T helicopter to rescue me. While deliberating on what to do I had pressed the "I'm OK but Need Help at this Location" button on my SPOT® device so that we could get some help coming in that direction.

Luckily we also had a Forest Service Radio and were able to contact our local Forest Service Ranger District and let them know we had an injured packer. We tried to get in touch with the work crew who was between the ridge and the trailhead, six miles away, so that they could assist in getting my stock out. We couldn't reach the work crew as they were in a deep ravine with not enough clear access to the repeaters.

At this time I pressed the S.O.S. button on my SPOT® device and at the same time told the Kalispell Interagency Dispatch Center that we had pressed the S.O.S. button asking for A.L.E.R.T to come and get me. Looking at the SPOT® I was receiving a "sent message" indicator. Everything copasetic Right?

OK here comes the kicker, evidently I needed to **turn off my SPOT® prior to sending the S.O.S. to reset the device.** Because I had sent the "I'm OK but needs help at this location" message earlier my S.O.S was not sent or received by GEOS.

So now A.L.E.R.T. was dispatched by our local Kalispell Interagency Dispatch Center and was on their way to get me to the hospital safely. **But, GEOS will not pay for an extraction, rescue or search that they do not Dispatch.**

So the way to insure that your special GEOS membership covers the cost of getting you out of the backcountry **you must let them dispatch the services to help you, no exceptions.**

As a side note when checking with Garmin and the inReach® product and GEOS the cost for the membership with a Garmin inReach® is \$29.00 per person covered and the same applies, they will only pay if they dispatch.

So make sure you follow the rules and if you are ever injured or need Search and Rescue let your device dispatch the service you need and make sure all of your family and friends with you are covered.

Submitted by Rick A. Mathies, President NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen.