

Playing with the V2 Spot GPS Messenger

Spot On

By Tom Niemela

I recently had a major emergency scenario ([which some of you may have read on the OMRA Message Board](#)). On a relatively simple trail ride, one of the riders in our group basically did the splits while almost stopped. So bad in fact, that this rider stretched his pelvic ligaments and tendons. He came to a stop, started to tip over and ended up with both legs almost 180 degrees apart from each other – think about it - ouch! There were four of us who tried to help the injured rider up the trail to a nearby road – no way. We only got him about 40 feet before he was writhing in pain. Luckily for us, one of the riders rode back to the truck, visited some locals who by chance had a stretcher, came back, and we carried the injured rider out.

What this means is two things:

- 1: No matter what/where or who you are, ANYONE can get injured over the simplest of situations! This rider has decades of experience. If you ride alone especially, the possibility of injury grows exponentially.
- 2: It sure would have been great to have some way to communicate a 911 situation while being out in the middle of the sticks and no cell phone reception.

Enter the Spot GPS Messenger. Think of this device as a way to transmit messages via satellites from almost anywhere. How the Spot works is like this: you preregister with Spot and enter your specific predetermined messages and contact people. You have the options of “I’m okay”, “I’m fine, but need help”, a custom message like, “I’m fine, but could really use a ham sandwich” and basically 911. There is also a ‘tracking’ feature for a small fee.

What does this mean for us, as off-road riders? It means a simplistic way to communicate with loved ones, whether all is well, or an emergency. This is huge!

Spot came out with their original version, which was decent, but had issues of nominal satellite reception, and no way of knowing whether the messages were actually sent or not. I purchased their new v2 of the Spot GPS Messenger and immediately gave it a number of tests. I logged in and registered on Spot’s website, entered the predetermined messages that I wanted to use, then proceeded to send out a number of “I’m okay” messages. The turnaround time for the messages was acceptable (just a few minutes). The messages received was the predetermined text I had entered, plus a link that showed the exact GPS coordinates and map of exactly where I was at the time. Cool! The satellite reception was very acceptable plus the LEDs on the unit confirmed that my messages got out.

I go out riding a LOT, whether it’s off road or even tarmac. I am completely sold on the value of these units and suggest that everyone get one. This would have been so valuable when I was in Baja with friends a couple years ago, or even when I was on my sabbatical on the road bike last year. The unit costs around \$150, plus about \$99/year for their services. That’s a chunk of bank,

but think about how cheap it is in the long run knowing that you can actually communicate with emergency services in the middle of nowhere!

The v2 of the Spot comes in orange or grey. It's lighter weight, too, at 5.2 ounces and the GPS chipset has seen an upgrade, making for faster unit-to-satellite connection times. The antenna has been upgraded for better performance in foliage and canopied environments, according to the company. There are also now safety covers over the SOS and Help buttons, giving users peace of mind that they will not accidentally hit "911" and send in the search-and-rescue troops when they thoughtlessly sit on their Spot. It runs on three AAA batteries, which last plenty of time, packs small and fits into a backpack or fanny pack nicely.

For more info, go to: www.findmespot.com I give this a big thumb's up and highly recommend you all get the version 2 of this product.

-Tom Niemela

