

PS VALUE GUIDE SPOT vs. PLB		
PRODUCT	SPOT	PLB
COST	\$170 plus required \$100 annual service fee (optional tracking feature is additional \$50/year)	\$400-\$700 No service fees
WARRANTY	1 year	5 years
WEIGHT	7.3 ounces	9 - 12 ounces, typically
POWER	Two AA lithium batteries; can use Alkaline batteries in an emergency	Typically some form of lithium battery pack
BATTERY LIFE	Power On, unit unused: 1 year SPOTcasting tracking mode: 14 days 911 mode: up to 7 consecutive days SPOTcheck OK/√: 1900 messages	Varies
REGISTRATION	Unit must be registered prior to operation, or no service is provided	In the U.S., unit must be registered with NOAA (no cost), but will operate if not registered
ALERT SERVICE	Alerts go to a contracted service provider and are then forwarded on to various SAR authorities	Alerts the worldwide, government-operated Cospas-Sarsat SAR system established by the US, Canada, France, and the former Soviet Union in 1979
ALERT LOCATING OPTIONS (OTHER THAN GPS)	No contingency tracking options available	If an internal GPS receiver fails, position can be calculated by Doppler processing method—same is true for non-GPS equipped units. Many PLBs also feature a 121.5-MHz homing feature, which can be positively locked on by USCG (up to 150 or more miles away)
FUNCTIONS	Distress beacon, tracking device, and messenger	Distress beacon
COVERAGE	Not worldwide	Worldwide
UNIT SELF TEST	Conducts internal self test each time powered up; unit and system operation verified by sending a test "OK" message	Most units have a limited self-test feature that verifies operation and that the signal is reaching antenna; no end-to-end verification is provided to the user