**LOCATION APPS: What are they and why do you need one?**

"*I use Gaia for all my navigation needs. Why do I need another app??"*

Great question! While all navigation apps, such as Gaia, Avenza, and Cal Topo, have the ability to deliver the digital coordinates of your present location, these data are sometimes in small text size, or require opening new pages within the app. Further, some apps, while they can be set to display a variety of coordinate formats, may only be able to display one format at a time.

In an emergency situation, you may need rapid access to easy-to-read coordinates so that you can quickly and accurately report your location. This is why a good **Location App** should be considered a necessary supplement to your usual navigation apps.

Location apps are stand-alone apps that open with one tap to a screen that delivers your present location, in the coordinate systems of your choice, in large, easy-to-read digits.

These apps do not require a cell signal as they depend solely on your phone's GPS receiver, so they will function anywhere as long as your phone has a reasonable view of the sky.

In North America, there are two coordinate systems in regular use. Whereas most agencies can use either system with equal ease, some agencies may prefer one over the other. Having an app that displays both, simultaneously, with a single tap is ideal.

The two formats that you should program your app to deliver are:

**USNG** (aka **MGRS**) -- This is the standard coordinate system used by Search Rescue teams throughout North America.

**Decimal Latitude/Longitude** – This older coordinate system is still the preferred format for some emergency agencies. Note that this is the decimal version of Lat/Long, not "degrees, minutes, and seconds" (DMS). Decimal Lat/Long is often listed in menus as *DD.ddddd*.

So, what apps are recommended? There are many to choose from, and of course the app landscape is ever-changing. At this time, the apps recommended below are excellent, and are available for free download. Both operate without a cell signal and neither requires a subscription.

For iPhone: **Tomstrails GPS DUO** is a solid choice. In settings, select **MGRS** and **DD.dddd** as your primary and secondary formats. For Android: Look at **MGRS UTM GPS**.

But wait…there's more!

Using a location app (many of which have a built-in upload feature) is an excellent way to collect and report the locations of trail issues to be sent to your CMC trail crews. You can also use them to quickly send location data to your "trusted person" at home. Have you ever left the house telling your spouse that you were starting your hike at X, but then changed your mind and are now starting at Y? You **always** tell your trusted person where you plan to hike and when you expect to return, right??

So don't delay! Download a location app today and don't forget to practice with it **before** hitting the trail. Also, if your land navigation skills are a bit rusty, please consider attending one of the regularly-scheduled "Navigation 101" classes offered by the CMC SAR Crew (who also brought you this article). Stay safe out there, everyone!