



How to Develop and Use a Help Locator System

A help locator system is a series of trail markers that contain numbers corresponding to GPS coordinates. These markers assist first responders to quickly find and attend to any park visitor who experiences a medical emergency while on the trails. The help locator numbers are typically found alongside or near your already installed mile marker posts and signs.

Creating a Help Locator System

Building your park's help locator system is simple. Before beginning, contact your local police and fire departments as well as EMS to discuss your intentions.

Next, you will assess how many markers will be needed. Plan to place a help locator marker about every 1/10 or 1/4 mile. *Do not forget to include a marker at the trail's start and finish.*

Once you have the total number of markers that will line your trail, you will need to number the markers sequentially, giving each one a specific number. This is typically a 3 or 4 digit number beginning with an easy to remember round number, such as 400, 401, 402.

If you have multiple trails within a single park, it is a good idea to add a letter to each marker that corresponds to the trail name. For example, if you have an Eagle trail and a Moving Rock trail, you might use E400, E401, E402 and M300, M301, M302.

If your trails are already identified by different colors, you can continue that system with the new help locator markers. Either the new markers will be fabricated in the same color as the trail, or you can number the help locator markers using a letter corresponding to the color. For example, a red trail might be R401, R402 and a green trail might be G301, G302.

Next, you provide us the all the marker information and we will fabricate your markers for installation.

Installation & Education

Once the markers are installed, you will go out to each one and record its exact GPS location, entering this information into spreadsheet or a database. Each help locator number will now have a corresponding GPS coordinate. Note that if you are using pre-existing posts or signs, you can record the GPS coordinates prior to this point.

After the entire system is in place and the GPS coordinates are recorded, share this information with your local first responders in whatever format they wish. In addition, you will need to educate your visitors about the new system. One way to do this is to display a trail head sign and map at the beginning of the trail with the help locator information. Such a map can display mileage, help locator numbers, and GPS coordinates. You can also provide paper versions of this map at the site and offer downloadable PDF versions on your website.

We can even create a QR Code that visitors can scan from the trail head with safety information and the map. In addition, if your trail is used at night, we can create help locator markers that are reflective or glow in the dark. Let us know how we can assist you in developing your help locator system to keep all of your visitors safe.