



SBWC Policy for Personal Locator Beacons

The SBWC purchased a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) for club leaders to borrow if considered a worthwhile part of their walk plan risk assessment. The club PLB is a 406MHz unit with GPS, made by GME model MT410G. The PLB is registered with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, AMSA. The GPS function means that, when activated, your position is sent to the Rescue Co-ordination Centre.

The PLB shall be kept by a Club Officer or another member nominated by the committee. This person will be responsible for controlling its loan and its registration, maintenance, battery replacement, storage, testing and final disposal.

The current registered person for SBWC is: Richard McNeil, phone 5622 0368, mob 0477 111 081

In the event of the PLB being activated, AMSA Search and Rescue will ring the registered owner on the phone numbers provided, to verify that the PLB has not been triggered by accident. This person should be reasonably available and ready to provide the AMSA people with the details of the trip.

On a trip, the PLB shall be under the control of the trip leader. It is important to guard against accidental or improper activation of the beacon, for example by children playing with the unit. The PLB shall be kept in a suitable place with this in mind. The unit is activated by breaking a safety seal. Bumps and jolts will not accidentally trigger the unit. Further, the unit will beep and flash for 60 seconds before it starts to transmit the distress signal.

GUIDANCE FOR USE

In an emergency it is best to contact the emergency services by two way communication, usually mobile phone, for the quickest response - this should be attempted first.

AMSA advise, *“If two way communications are not available, then a distress beacon should be activated in situations of grave and imminent danger. This equates to when you feel you are facing a life threatening situation. This is a personal decision that is different for everybody.”* Ref 1.

If you decide to activate the PLB – follow the directions on the PLB. Leaders may wish to check these when they collect the PLB.

Note the following guidelines from the AMSA website:

“Satellites cannot detect beacons through mountains, trees or buildings. If your beacon has not been deployed correctly with aerial vertical in a clear open area or you are located in a valley, geostationary satellites are unlikely to see you. In these cases, you must wait for polar-orbiting satellites to pass overhead, which may take several hours.”

“If emergency contacts are aware of trip details or trip details have been submitted online, search operations can be commenced much sooner. So it is essential to keep your details up to date.” Ref 1.

You should be prepared for the arrival of a search helicopter.

The system is very reliable however there is no way of knowing if the distress message has got through. You should consider what to do if no rescue arrives in a reasonable time. You may need to send a party out with a message or a mobile phone or other action as appropriate.

If the PLB is activated by accident – turn it off and call AMSA as soon as possible. There is no penalty for accidental operation. Their number - **1800 641 792**.

There is much more information on the AMSA website.

Reference:

1. AMSA website - www.amsa.gov.au accessed 16 Feb 2017