The Nome Alaska Volunteer Fire Department and Search and Rescue Unit

Kevin Knowlton, of the Nome Alaska Volunteer Fire Department and Search and Rescue (SAR) Unit sent in a great story of how his SAR team helped rescue someone through receiving a HELP message. Using the buddy system is another great way that SPOT can be there for you in a survival situation. Through creative ways of using the HELP message, such as in this case, we are able to share this story today:

"I am a member of the Nome Alaska Volunteer Fire Department and Search and Rescue Unit. At approximately 5:30 pm on February 24, 2009, we received a tone out for a search and rescue. Upon reporting to the fire hall, we learned that a hunter out alone on snowmobile hunting musk ox had activated his SPOT using the HELP feature. The e-mail message had the hunter's coordinates and we were able to see on the Google map the type of terrain that the signal was coming from."

"Weather was marginal with temps around 20 degrees and the wind blowing around 25 miles per hour; it was foggy and snowing horizontally. We dispatched a quick reaction team to the coordinates, which were approximately 12 miles west of Nome and about 2 miles in from the coast. Within approximately 45 minutes of leaving, the team was in the vicinity of the signal and within minutes we found the hunter at almost exactly where the SPOT unit told us we would find him. His snowmobile had broken through the ice on a small creek and was stuck up to the middle of the cowling in ice and snow. The hunter was wet and the nearest shelter was over 2 miles away. Without the SPOT, the outcome for this hunter might have been a lot different. We may have not started looking for him until he was reported late or missing and we would have been looking for a needle in a haystack. After the recovery, our local weather deteriorated to blizzard conditions and instead of a hunter and rescuers sitting at home this morning, we could still be looking for him and preparing ourselves for the worst. Thank you SPOT, I own a unit myself and do not leave home without it."

- Kevin Knowlton, Nome, Alaska Volunteer Fire Department and Search and Rescue Unit.