



SAN LEANDRO POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Dale S. Attarian, Chief of Police

The following are the results regarding GPS Tracking units for suspect vehicles. Over 40 agencies responded to my inquiry. Each had their own preference as to which tracker worked best for their needs. Trackers ranged from homemade units to units manufactured by companies.

The most commonly-used tracker as reported by several agencies is the "Orion ST-811" by Cobham Tracking & Locating (contact info: Neil Spencer, nspencer@cobhamtl.com 800-665-4648). Other trackers that agencies praised are Coleman Trackers by Coleman Technologies (contact info: Mike Nicoloff 407-481-8600 x124) and Trackers by ZN Trading Company (contact info: Ken Laskin kenl@zntradingcompany.com).

Each of these companies was contacted and demo units were requested for testing. ZN Trading Company was very poor in customer support and failed to provide the necessary information to test the tracking unit within the 10-day trial period. Therefore I would not recommend this company. Coleman Technologies took several months to provide a demo tracker but when it was received it worked well in live tracking and documenting locations where the vehicle stopped. Again, we had 10 days to try out the equipment so not all the features this unit provides were tested. The unit uses 4 AA batteries, which will last 6-8 hours if the live-tracking feature is used a great deal. One drawback with this unit is that after the initial service plan, there is a monthly service charge for the same coverage. Since returning the unit, I have not heard from anyone at Coleman Technologies.

Cobham Tracking not only sent a demo unit but also sent their West Coast Manager Neil Spencer to help set up the unit and demo all its features. We tested the Orion ST-811 and found it offered more applications and features than the other units. Tech support is available 24/7 and answered all questions that we encountered during its use. The unit uses three 9-volt lithium batteries that last about 6-8 hours of live tracking. Additional battery packs can be purchased/wired to the unit for longer usage. The unit can also be programmed to send an e-mail when the batteries are getting low so it can be retrieved. The Orion ST-811 can be put on sleep mode and set up to send an e-mail when the unit moves. This model has many more features that are currently still being tested. Once the equipment and software are purchased, there are no additional costs. Cobham also provides a free 2-day school on the use of the unit and its various features.

As a result of all the testing and input from the responding agencies, a request was submitted to purchase the Orion ST-811.

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