

Technology Today

Product Review

Zoombak - A James Bond Style Tracking Device

When your driving directions fail to get you to your final destination you might wish you had a GPS navigation system that could give you turn by turn directions. Zoombak is a GPS locator not a GPS navigator. So it could find your current location but not help you find your intended destination. Another way of putting this is Zoombak is more James Bond than Map Quest.

Zoombak is designed to locate people, pets, or vehicles that have been tagged with the device. It is not designed to tell you where you are; it is designed to tell the person who tagged you or your vehicle your current location.

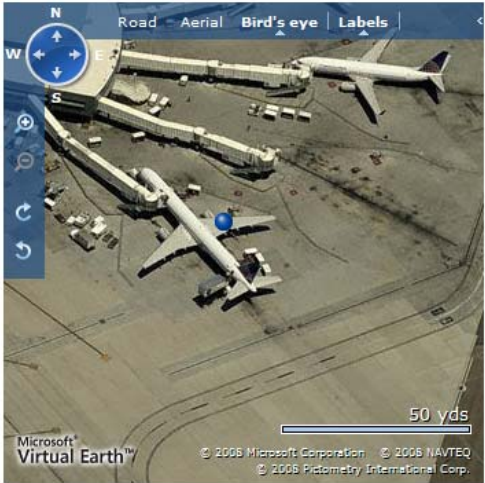
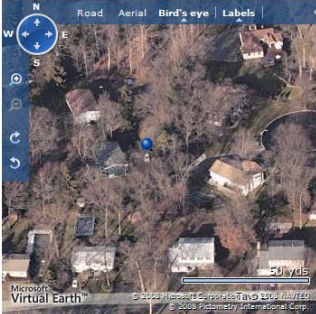
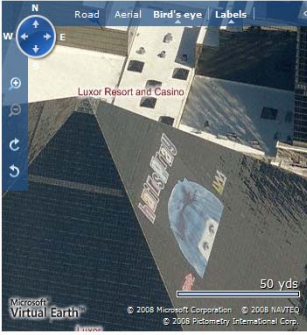
To find the current location of your Zoombak a person must log into <http://www.zoombak.com> and sign in using a personal login name and password. When they select locate, the Zoombak system sends a signal to the identified locator and it responds by transmitting its location. Zoombak units are also designed to email their controllers when a battery is getting low, it is shut off, or if a pre-programmed safety zone is breached.

I tested a Zoombak on our January trip to the Consumer Electronics show (CES) in Las Vegas. Jessica Nunes, our controller for the test, frequently logged onto the Zoombak website using her desktop computer in New York. It only took

seconds for Jessica to locate our location in Las Vegas; see sample computer screen shots taken from the Zoombak website. When she provided us with the following images I was very impressed with the functionality and tracking abilities of the unit.

A Zoombak location can be displayed as a street location on a map, an aerial image, or a bird's eye view of the location. The accuracy of the unit was uncanny as long as we had a reasonable view of the sky. It is important to note that the satellite images that create the aerial and bird's eye views are stock images from Microsoft's Virtual Earth. This obviously means that the satellite image if super enlarged will not contain an image of the person, object, or vehicle that you are tracking.

In this birds eye view of my home you don't see the snow that you would see if the image was being created in real-time.



I am sure the airplane that is shown in this bird's eye view, of us at the airport, is not the plane that we were actually seated on when this location was determined. Basically you are looking at a stock photo that happens to show a plane in the same Las Vegas Airport gate that we flew out of to return to New York. Now locate the lollipop stick that shows our approximate location in the view. In this photo Zoombak indicates an accuracy of 50 yards to our exact location. We were actually seated in a window and aisle seat on the right side of our plane in the first row of seats just past the wing.

The Zoombak user's manual indicates the unit cannot find locations when indoors unless the unit is very close to a window. Zoombak personal locators range in price from \$ 200.00 to \$ 250.00 dollars and you must sign up for a monthly service fee to access locations; which will cost you approximately an additional \$ 180.00 per year.

Dr. Alan J. Pierce is co-author of Introduction to Technology Glencoe McGraw-Hill 2010 and a TechDirections Magazine Columnist goto: www.technologytoday.us for past columns and resources.