DO I NEED A SATELLITE MESSENGER IF MY PHONE CAN TEXT BY SATELLITE?

Usually not. A recent iPhone or Pixel can already send satellite SOS, and an iPhone can text by satellite with a clear sky. A dedicated messenger such as a Garmin inReach or a ZOLEO adds tracking, check-ins and a separate battery, which matters in canyons, forests and remote trips.

THE STEPS

01 Day hikes in open country with a recent iPhone or Pixel: your phone is probably enough.

02 Remote trips, dense forest or canyons: a dedicated device is more reliable because it carries its own battery and antenna.

03 Compare plans. Garmin's launch release says plans start at $14.99 a month; ZOLEO lists the device at $199 and we could not read its plan prices.

04 Whatever you carry, leave your route and return time with someone, and carry a paper map.

THE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Your phone checked for satellite features
- ☐ A plan chosen before the trip
- ☐ Route shared with someone
- ☐ A paper map

Sources: Apple Support, Emergency SOS via satellite; Apple Support, Messages via satellite. Last reviewed November 17, 2026. General planning information, not medical, legal or financial advice.