

2020 GPS FLEET TRACKING BUYERS GUIDE

This buyer's guide is designed with one purpose in mind: to help you find the best possible GPS fleet tracking system for your needs.

We hear many questions here at One Step GPS. "Are all GPS fleet tracking devices and companies the same?" "They all look the same, who do I pick?" "What sets one company apart from the next?" "Should I just buy the cheapest one?" "Should I buy the most expensive one?"

This guide is meant to empower you to find the best product FOR YOU, be it ours or another company.

In the following pages we'll discuss:

- How GPS tracking works
- Different types of devices
- Answers to common questions
- How to present GPS tracking to your employees

But first, let's dive into the factors that set different companies apart to provide you with a list of questions you can ask when shopping.

PART 1: COMPARING GPS TRACKING COMPANIES

Not all devices GPS tracking devices and companies are created equal. There are many differences between companies, many of which don't exactly catch the eye of the untrained observer.

Upfront cost and monthly fee

This is not always readily available. Most companies don't put prices on their websites because they don't want to scare you away with how much it can cost. But we are going to come right out and say it: As of this writing in 2020, prices can range from \$15 to \$60 a month.

Some companies will require you to purchase equipment or pay large deposits to start. These can be daunting when you are implementing a system for the first time. While GPS tracking will save your company money in the long run, up front costs will make it take longer to break even on your investment.

Find a good company that offers what you need at an affordable price.

The actual cost of equipment

What is the cost of the GPS devices themselves? Do you have to purchase upgrades when technology is outdated? What if a device breaks? It is also important to find out the cost of replacement.

Is a contract required?

Contracts originally were used to safeguard the GPS company's resources, but they are coming to be a thing of the past. The problem is, technology moves fast, and markets and industries change even faster. If you're locked into a contract, you will most likely get stuck with old technology. GPS service contracts also decrease the necessity for a GPS company to provide superlative service. The thinking apparently goes that when you're under contract, you're stuck with them no matter what — so who cares about customer service? You're not going anywhere. Some contracts even state the company cannot guarantee that service will be uninterrupted, error-free ... or even accurate.

Another caution is companies that have contracts tend to have an automatic renewal 60 to 90 days before expiration. If you pick a company that has a contract, at least make sure it does not automatically renew. Circumstances can be much different by the time your contract is about to expire. You won't be locked into a contract at One Step GPS.

Installation cost

This can be tricky: the full cost of installation might not be apparent at first. Some GPS providers cover this cost if you sign a contract for a certain amount of time, but the tradeoff is that you are now locked in for a certain number of years. On top of that, it can take several months before they complete the installation, and you will still be paying for the service even though you aren't using it.

If the devices are cheap (as in, low-quality junk you might have to spend time or money to replace the device multiple times. Other GPS companies will only let their own staff touch the GPS devices, which can lead to logistical nightmares and unworkable schedules.

The bottom line: find a flexible solution that works for you. It might not always seem cheaper, but by asking the right questions you can determine what works best for you.

Money back guarantee

This is important because this is how you protect yourself and your money. What if the solution doesn't work as advertised? What if you realize there is something that you don't like, or the company can't install the devices, or they are not compatible with your vehicle? No matter how many questions you ask and how prepared you are, something can always go wrong. The best way to protect yourself is to find a company that has a Money Back Guarantee. We offer such a guarantee at One Step GPS.

Hardware Warranty

Is it **high-quality hardware**? Will it be problem free? There is one easy way to tell. Does it have a warranty, and if so, how long is the warranty? If not, forget it — the company doesn't stand behind their product. They know they will have warranty claims and lose money. The longer the warranty, the better, because a company that truly has a great product would warranty it forever. This is why we offer such a warranty.

Tracking update speed

This is how fast and how frequently new GPS coordinates are transmitted to your account for viewing and alerts. This lends a hand to how effective your system can be. In an extreme example, imagine if the device only updated once an hour — how would you know what people were doing? What if it was every 5 minutes: could you accurately see what roads they were taking, or how long they were stopped? And what about every 3 minutes? Think about how long 3 minutes is while you are driving. That's why you want the updates to be as close to real-time as possible.

How long is historic data available

Some companies only allow access to 60 to 90 days worth of data. That's not bad, but what if you need to look up something that happened four months ago? You don't know exactly when you will need the data, but you will sure wish you had it when something goes wrong. These companies will charge extra to provide data outside the 90 day window, and what you thought you were spending can suddenly increase.

Amount of time to get a representative on the phone

Your time is valuable. You shouldn't have to wait for customer service, period.

Cellular data provider

Most GPS companies rely on cellular data to transmit information from the device to your screen, but some companies will only use one network to provide service. This can create problems

because none of the major carriers cover the entire USA. If a company has access to two or three carriers, the odds dramatically increase that you will never see a lapse in coverage.

3G or 4G

Verizon has announced that they will decommission their 3G network on December 31st, 2019 while AT&T could follow suit by the end of 2021. If the company you rely on is using 3G devices, you could wind up having to pay extra to upgrade to new equipment as soon as this year. If a company utilizes 4G technology, it should be at least another 5 years before any devices will need to be upgraded.

Internal or External Antennas

The antennas on early GPS devices were so large that they had to be located outside the device. But cell phone technology has improved so much that antennas are now being placed inside GPS devices. Some companies have not evolved, so if you see an external antenna, you know you are using an older or cheaper device. More importantly, an external antenna is easier to interfere with, is more noticeable, and is harder to install. Seek out a company that uses the latest devices and save yourself a headache. At One Step GPS, we keep our devices updated with the latest technology at all times.

Allows Integrations (Open API)

This may not be important to you, but if it is, you will surely want access to it. API access allows companies to pull more sophisticated data and access the GPS information directly through custom-coded programming solutions. It can allow the program to work with things like fuel cards, maintenance platforms, dispatching, and more.

Complaints/Reviews

It is very easy to determine the quality of service and the type of company you are dealing with just by looking up their reviews on third-party sites like Google, Yelp, or the Better Business Bureau. Remember, most customers don't write reviews unless they've had an extremely bad or extremely good experience, so make sure to take individual reviews with a grain of salt. It's best to read a wide range of reviews to get an overall impression of what others have to say about the company.



Google Maps (Street, Satellite, live Traffic)

Google Maps has long been established as the industry standard in the mapping space. Not only is it the most widely used, it is also touted as the most accurate and highest-quality mapping system on the market. Any company using a free mapping system or their own proprietary system will not be as accurate as Google Maps.

Tamper/Disconnection Alerts

If your vehicle is being stolen, or someone doesn't want to be tracked, they will tamper with or disconnect the GPS. If this happens, you want to be notified immediately, as the sooner you can respond, the less potential for loss or harm will occur.

Does the company offer reports for important alerts?

The following alerts should minimally be offered: Speed & Unsafe driving alerts, Geofence/After Hours alerts, Idling Reports and Ignition ON/OFF Reports, DTC (Check engine light) alerts, Vehicle Maintenance & Reminders, Text and Email Alerts or Reports.

Mobile App (iOS and Android)

You will most likely want to be able to check in on GPS information when you are out of the office. Does the GPS service offer mobile apps that are compatible with the phones your company uses?

Unlimited users

How many people can view the system at the same time? And do you have to pay extra for this feature? It is better to know before you buy.

PART 2:

HOW GPS TRACKING WORKS

A GPS device is composed of a GPS receiver to get location, a cellular modem to transmit location, accelerometers to measure motion and driving behavior, and components which calculate and store data. A lot of data, in fact: it's possible to monitor how accurate the location is, whether the engine is on, off, or idling, current speed, fuel levels, check engine lights, and whether the device has been tampered with. There are even alerts for driving behavior such as harsh braking, fast acceleration, and unsafe cornering. This data can be accessed through a website, a phone app, or a desktop computer program.

GPS devices are typically installed under or behind the dash of a vehicle. The device is able to transmit the data to the GPS tracking companies' servers where it is processed by the company so it can be viewed, analyzed, put into reports and consumed easily to determine exactly where and what your employees are doing without having to leave your office. You no longer have to make phone calls asking where someone is or how long until they are done or even have to worry someone is not doing what they are supposed to be doing.



PART 3: DIFFERENT TYPES OF DEVICES

There are two main types of GPS devices for vehicles, and they each have benefits and drawbacks:

The Plug-in Device

This device plugs into the On Board Diagnostics II port, commonly known as the OBD-II. Installation is easy — just like charging a phone. The OBD-II plug is located underneath the dash, and all passenger and light commercial vehicles built after 1997 are federally mandated to have them within 3 feet of the steering wheel.

Some plug-in devices are more complex than others, with functionality to read fuel levels, throttle position, check engine lights, odometer, and much more.

Plug-in devices are common because they are easy to install. If you are concerned about employees removing the device, there are ways to make them less noticeable or more difficult to access. If the device is removed or disabled, it should immediately send an alert.



Pros:

- Quick and easy installation
- No wiring or electrical experience needed
- Tamper/disconnection alerts
- Engine diagnostics/check engine warnings

Cons:

- Can be easy to remove
- Can be noticeable
- Extra cables required to hide the device
- Small backup batteries

The Hardwired Device

This device is versatile because it can work with any power source. It doesn't matter what year it was made, and there are multiple places in the vehicle where it can be installed. This is generally used for a more discrete and tamper-proof installation or in vehicles that are not compatible with the OBD-II device.

Additionally, hardwired devices allow for add-ons that won't be found on plug-in devices. These include features like driver identification, starter disable, Power Take Off monitoring (a way of monitoring when a component or accessory in a vehicle is activated or in use), and temperature sensors. They can come with internal or external antennas and a robust array of backup battery options.

Other than the additional work required for installation of a hardwired device, there are few differences between the hardwired and plug-in units unless you need the add-ons.



Pros:

- Tamper/Disconnection alerts
- More discrete, tamper-proof installation
- Larger backup battery
- Custom add-ons

Cons:

- More complex Installation
- Electrical experience required
- No engine diagnostic data
- Possible external antenna

Important data about GPS Devices

Not all devices are created equal. The cheap ones wear out and break down, causing more problems than they solve and costing you money. The only guarantee of accurate reliability is QUALITY.

Using a cheap device will lead to some if not all of the following:

- Disconnecting frequently
- Draining batteries
- Sending false alerts
- Appearing to be "offline" when the vehicle is moving
- Inaccurately reporting driving behavior
- Interfering with the vehicle computer system
- Breaking down quickly
- Simply not working at all

Our experience has shown that manufacturers with offices and headquarters in the United States tend to be more dependable. If your device fails or malfunctions, it's **much easier** to hold them accountable — so they want to make sure their product is solid. Make sure to find out if the manufacturer stands behind their product: Do they offer exchanges and returns? Do they have a warranty on the device? We uphold these standards ourselves at One Step GPS, and we encourage you to keep these points in mind when you are shopping for the best GPS solution.

PART 4:

ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

Choosing the right GPS tracking platform is just as important as installing the right device. The platforms may appear to be similar, but using these systems reveals some important differences.

Like different types of phones or computers, GPS platforms share a lot of features: most customers need toolbars and maps, and every GPS system has these components. But what makes one better than another are benefits like speed, ease of access, the accuracy of data displayed, and the ability to configure and generate reports to get the information you need to run your business.

What are the benefits of GPS tracking?

With GPS tracking, businesses can monitor the routes their drivers take in order to minimize wasted time or reduce fuel costs. You might have a driver that takes longer routes, or one who drives in a way that consumes more fuel and leads to frequent repairs. Another factor to think with is the unauthorized use of company vehicles on nights and weekends. Maybe you don't mind if they take a quick trip to the grocery store on the way home from work, but what about abusing company equipment to hustle for side jobs on your dime? Plus some insurance companies will not cover company vehicles used for non-work related purposes. The point is this: with GPS tracking, you are in the know and you are in control.

Other benefits include:

- *Better customer service = improved customer retention.* When a customer calls and asks how long it will be until someone arrives, you can find out in an instant with GPS tracking. You don't need to call your employee and wait for them to answer - because you **already** have the data at your fingertips.
- *Efficient driver dispatching.* If you know exactly how much time someone has spent on a job, it is easy to find out how long it will be until a driver will be free — including which driver is closest — and you can view it all on a map which is easy to act on.

- *Reduction of unnecessary overtime.* if you have someone who makes an unauthorized stop at home or other places they shouldn't go, or if they take an extra-long lunch, this can extend the employee's day and artificially generate overtime.
- *Protection against false claims.* GPS tracking makes it effortless to prove to a customer how long you were at their location, when it was, and how often. This can prevent someone from saying you did not do the job you were paid to do.
- *Improved driver morale.* With your GPS tracking system in place, driver accountability is no longer an issue. You now have a tool to see when your employees are being productive, and you can act to reward good performance and increase production.

Good employees usually are reluctant to report on lazy or inefficient counterparts. More times than not, employees are aware of non-optimum behavior but are afraid to be a "snitch," and so they don't say anything. Because of this, good employees wind up carrying the majority of the workload, while the slackers get by without having to work. This has a negative effect on morale. But now you have the tool to improve unproductive workers.

Some employees fear GPS tracking because they don't want the scrutiny. But the truth of the matter is, in most cases GPS tracking is used to optimize efficiency, improve routes, ensure customer satisfaction and reduce liability. This also can allow you to have peace of mind about the whereabouts of your employees.



Does GPS tracking pay for itself?

Yes it does, and in more ways than one. Eliminating just one hour of unnecessary overtime per month can pay for the service. With improved efficiency, taking on that one extra job can be enough to shift your bottom line into the black. An accident avoided due to improved driving behavior can be worth an entire year of the service, recouping the outlay in an instant.

The success stories we have heard from our customers will help illustrate just some of the unexpected ways companies have saved money using GPS tracking.

For example, one company with a fleet of 20 vehicles saved \$8,000 in unnecessary payroll expenditure and over \$1,000 in fuel costs by eliminating unnecessary driving in just the first month!

Another customer recovered an expensive piece of equipment that had been stolen from a job site. When the police showed up at the location our GPS indicated, they were surprised to discover 14 additional stolen vehicles and pieces of equipment at a chop shop.

One Step GPS saved another customer \$6,000 he noticed that one of his vehicles was being driven two weekends in a row when it should have been parked. He decided to check it out, and when he arrived at the location, he found two of his employees doing a side job for a customer that should have gone to the company. On top of that, they were using company materials in the project and asking for cash.

One of our customers found a foreman of his taking several company employees to his own jobs — and the company was paying for it. He had “free” labor and the jobs the company was getting paid to do were taking longer to complete. That is, until our GPS tracking system exposed the fraud.

Finally, one company had an employee come in late one Monday. He said he had an accident on his way to work and totaled the vehicle on his way in. But when the company pulled up the GPS data to see what happened, it turned out that the vehicle had crashed the night before on the way home from a bar. Without that vital information, the same thing could have happened again, with no recourse for the company.



PART 5:

HOW TO PRESENT GPS TRACKING TO EMPLOYEES

Introducing GPS tracking to employees is a common concern for many businesses. By presenting the technology in the right way, employees will get a positive perception of the system when you explain how and why the technology will be used. This means having open conversations with employees, not leaving uncertainty in what might happen, and focusing on how it will actually benefit the employees themselves by protecting them from any dishonesty and fraud on the part of others.

One of the best ways to gain acceptance from employees is to discuss how GPS tracking actually benefits the employees themselves. It is important to show them how GPS tracking improves safety and makes operations much more efficient. And when a business operates at maximum efficiency, there is a direct impact on revenue — at which point higher pay, better working conditions and increased job security move into the realm of possibility. Implementation of a GPS tracking system can also be used to incentivize improvements to better serve your customers.

Inform your employees that your company is staying up on the current business technologies by instituting a new fleet management system that will allow the company to gain a competitive edge. The objective is to increase efficiency, resulting in a positive impact on customers and the company's bottom line.

Explaining how GPS tracking works

Describe the system and what it will record: engine status, location, speed, mileage, distance traveled, stop time, and what routes are taken. It's good to show an actual report generated on a day they drove a particular vehicle.

Next, provide them with an overview of the benefits the system will provide, from decreased insurance premiums to increased route management. If the subject of "big brother" comes up, don't avoid it — acknowledge it. Describe it as another tool used by company management to better run the company. GPS tracking is like a work order, time card, customer survey or any other tool to help run the business. It is a tool, nothing more, nothing less.

Here is an example of what one might say to introduce the system:

"Thank you all for joining me today. I would like to talk to you about a new system we are implementing in the next few days.



“In order to remain competitive and prosper in today’s market, it is important for us to monitor industry trends and stay ahead of the curve wherever we can. Electronic fleet management is changing and improving the way companies operate today. Because of this, we made an investment in a system that will ultimately help us be more efficient, have a positive impact on our customers, and hopefully improve our bottom line.

“The power of this system comes from the honesty and accountability it generates. Not just in the event that someone tries to take advantage of the rest of us from within our ranks — but what about clients and customers who lie and say you were late, when we all know you were there on time? The beauty of this GPS system is that it tells the truth, and as long as you do your job, you have job security here. Now if you have any questions or concerns, please let me know after this and we’ll get everything squared away and answered.”

It should not surprise your employees when they are held accountable for their behavior based on data gathered by the GPS tracking system. That is why it is a best practice to write policies for when and where GPS tracking will be used, and to share this information with your all your employees before taking any disciplinary actions. As long as employees understand what is expected and what will happen, there should be no backlash.



PART 6: COMPARISON CHECKLIST

You can use this checklist to compare the pros and cons of different GPS tracking companies.

	One Step GPS	Second Option	Third Option
Price to start/monthly?			
Cost of equipment			
Contract(s) Required?			
Device update speed?			
Device Warranty?			
Money Back Guarantee?			
How long is history data stored?			
Time to get a representative on the phone			
Cell phone provider			
3G or 4G			
Internal or External Antennas			
Allows Integrations (Open API)			
Reviews- ShopperApproved, Yelp, BBB, etc.			
Google Maps (Street, Satellite, live Traffic)			
Tamper/Disconnection Alerts.			
Speed, Geofence, After Hours Alerts			
Idling Reports and Ignition ON/OFF Reports			
Vehicle Maintenance & Reminders			
Text and Email Alerts			
Mobile App (iOS and Android)			
Unlimited user(s)			
Can be viewed from anywhere?			

