

Rescue Laser Flare from Greatland Laser



The Rescue Laser Flare from Greatland Laser is a signalling device that operates like a laser pointer, but instead of emitting a beam focussed to a single point, the flare fans the beam in a line. The manufacture rates the effective range of the flare as ten miles. The flare has O-ring seals that make it waterproof and submersible to three feet.

Unlike the pyrotechnic flares commonly used by kayakers, the Laser Flare is not omnidirectional: To use it as a signalling device you have to aim it with the technique similar to that when using signal mirrors. Hold one hand out in front of you, fingers spread in a V as if making the "peace" sign. Sight between your fingers at the target you want to hit. With the other hand hold the laser alongside your face at eye level, shining its stripe of light vertically on one of the fingers on your outstretched hand. Slowly move the red band of light from finger to finger across the target.

At 50 feet, the band of light from the laser is about four feet tall. That comes out to an angle a bit over four degrees. At five miles the beam would cover an elevation of over 2,000 feet.

At the receiving end of the signal the red light of the laser is not likely to be confused with any other light. It's not blinding, but it creates the appearance that it is coming from a much larger source. It has the same spread of light that you experience with a camera flash, but without the after effects. The high visibility of the laser is what gives it an advantage over pyrotechnics. The light from a pyrotechnic flare needs a dark background to stand out, and its light grows dimmer by the square of the distance. The laser light carries much farther without losing much visibility. In broad daylight I signalled my paddling partner, Tim, aiming the laser at his neighborhood over three miles away. He could easily see a bright red flash, so different from any other light that it would readily be interpreted as a signal.

The flare carries a Federal Laser warning about direct eye exposure, and Greatland warns against eye exposure within 13 feet. Beyond that distance, according to the manufacturer, the laser beam is not harmful to anyone who might catch sight of it.

The flare is also useful for locating anything with retroreflective tape on it. If you put retroreflective stickers on your kayak, paddle, camera, tent, etc. you'll be able to locate those items quickly in the dark whether ashore or afloat. I could easily see flashes coming from retroreflectors 700 yards away.

If you have the misfortune to have to signal for help from the water, a pyrotechnic flare has the advantage of 360-degree visibility, but may not have the brightness or the duration to attract help from a distance. The laser has a much greater range, and although it requires aiming, can attract the attention of aircraft or other distant vessels that would otherwise be unable to see you.

\$89.95 from Greatland Laser, LLC, 4001 West International Airport Road, Suite 2, Anchorage, AK 99502, Phone: (907) 245-4475, E-mail: laser@alaska.net, www.greatlandlaser.com **SK**

Christopher Cunningham is editor of this magazine.

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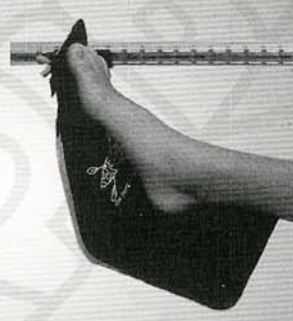
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