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Contact: Rob Palmer, Palmer PR, T: 01582 763255 / 07768 242761
E: rpalmer@palmerpr.com

The Car that Calls for Help

Coming to a road near you, the car that calls for help after a crash, alerts the police if it's stolen and puts an end to high-speed car chases.

A new system from car parts and logistics giant Unipart will automatically alert police if a car is involved in a serious accident or is stolen. Called Neo-Trac, the sophisticated black box pinpoints the exact position of the vehicle using satellite tracking, linked with computerised mapping.

So even if a motorist ends up upside-down, unconscious in a ditch, the system takes over - alerting the police. And if a Neo-Trac car is stolen, police can track it safely at a distance without the thief knowing and, when the car stops, remotely disable the engine.

Unipart's project leader Chris Skillen said: "For around a pound a day motorists can enjoy all these benefits."

"There is a golden hour following an accident involving serious injury, and the Neo-Trac service can significantly cut the time it takes for the police to respond. A further serious road safety benefit is that, if a Neo-Trac vehicle is stolen, police can use the system to track the car out of the thief's line of sight.

"And if the thief pulls into a lay-by or a service station, the police can order the system to disable the engine and make an arrest without the obvious dangers of a high-speed pursuit. As a system for tracking and recovering stolen vehicles Neo-Trac meets all the latest requirements of the insurance industry's Thatcham Category 5 standard which is supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)," says Skillen.

"Accident monitoring is an additional feature of Neo-Trac, offering a brand new service where the standards have yet to be defined. Clearly this is cutting-edge technology, so we're actively pursuing the need for independent testing and new standards for aftermarket systems where none presently exist."

"There is eCall, which is a project of the European Commission intended to bring rapid assistance to motorists based on the 112 universal emergency telephone number adopted by GSM mobile networks. This is aimed at equipping new cars with the technology to automatically send an accident alert. Although the terms of eCall are not yet fully defined, we do expect Neo-Trac to meet all the requirements."

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“Meanwhile, what Neo-Trac can do today is help address this issue for existing vehicles by automatically alerting our monitoring centre, which in turn will inform the police.”

Neo-Trac’s advanced technology includes a motion sensor that detects abrupt changes in speed or direction of the vehicle and is activated within micro-seconds if the car runs into something, is shunted from behind or turns over. If activated, trained staff at the Neo-Trac Secure Operating Centre will alert the police station closest to the car for a swift response.

“If the driver is unconscious or unable to make a call for help, then Neo-Trac will have ensured that help is already on its way, potentially helping to save the lives of the vehicle occupants,” says Skillen.

In Great Britain alone the most recent statistics published by the Department for Transport reveal 259,000 road accidents involving personal injury - including 3,172 deaths. There were also 185,000 vehicle thefts.

“The key to getting a stolen vehicle returned is the reaction time,” says Skillen. “It’s exactly the same principle if a vehicle is involved in an accident, when a prompt alert can potentially help to save lives.”

“While vehicle crime has decreased in recent years, vehicle recovery rates have also decreased. And high value cars are particularly at risk.”

To pinpoint a car’s precise location, Neo-Trac employs one of the most powerful GPS receivers available, which is used in combination with the latest mobile communications and radio frequency identification technologies.

It can even sense when signal strengths are poor and automatically boosts its performance making a vehicle easier to locate in remote areas as well as underground car parks or garages.

These latest technologies enable a vehicle to be tracked night and day if necessary right around the globe and certainly throughout Europe.

The Neo-Trac security and safety monitoring solution is available in a range of packages from £615 upwards plus a £185 annual fee and comes with a three-year warranty. This works out at £1.07 a day over the first three years. And for a small fee the service, technology and three year warranty can be transferred with the car to a new owner.

It is anticipated that it will also help to reduce insurance premiums. It is installed by security cleared technicians vetted and accredited by the Vehicle Systems Installation Board (VSIB). This too is an essential qualification stipulated by ACPO.

Motorists can order Neo-Trac from a dedicated website www.neo-trac.co.uk which provides comprehensive details of the monitoring solution and service provided by Unipart.

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