



APLICOM VEHICLE COMPUTERS BOOST VEHICLE RECOVERY TIMES IN THE M25 AND SOUTH-EAST AREA

Advanced telematics from Siemens Datatrak Location and Information Systems and the latest in-vehicle computer workstations from Aplicom have been introduced to the M25 area – significantly improving vehicle recovery times and manpower efficiency.

Each of the 200+ recovery vehicles in the area's largest fleet - operated by Ontime Rescue and Recovery – has an Aplicom computer workstation including clear screen monitor, reliable central processing unit and keypad. Design and creation of the software and management of the entire communications network has been carried out by Siemens Datatrak, one of the world leaders in vehicle location and two-way interactive data communications.

The recovery vehicle driver receives text messages using the Aplicom hardware and the Siemens Datatrak communications software – faster, clearer and more accurately than the previous mobile phone system. He is then able to report back to the Ontime control centre at the touch of a single button.

Colin Jefferys, Ontime's Operations Director, says the Aplicom vehicle computers, working with the Siemens Datatrak telematics and communications software, are helping to improve productivity at a time when the industry is sorely in need of efficiency gains to counter the additional cost impact associated with the introduction of drivers' hours legislation generating significantly improved efficiency.

"All data needed by the driver is sent direct to the vehicle and stored so he can access it when it is needed. Text-based data is a lot more reliable and accurate than using verbal, mobile telephone links," he says.

"In the past, while the control centre has had all the information, communication to the drivers has been by mobile phone and that is open to mistakes and misinterpretations. Time is also significantly reduced because the data received by the control centre can be immediately copied to the driver, cutting out telephone calls, the need for checking of locations and addresses, and manual logging."

Ontime's control centres pick up information from the Laserbyte server – central host for the calls from police and motoring organisations. The control centre then allocates this data to the best located and most suitably equipped recovery vehicle. The driver is audibly informed he has a message and he can then respond as soon as it is safe to do so – using the Aplicom screen and keypad without having to spend time using a mobile phone.

Data displayed on the Aplicom screen means that the driver is often aware of the extent of the problem before he arrives, improving customer service and making maximum use of time at the roadside. At the incident the driver generates a status report on the Aplicom keypad, often by pressing a single button for messages such as 'On Scene' or 'Recovery Completed'.

The Aplicom ICA 2004 workstations include a high definition monochrome monitor and easy to operate, dashboard-mounted keypad. Aplicom vehicle computers are fully programmable and allow Siemens Datatrak to carry out all their own software programming using the highly reliable, simple to operate OS95 system developed by Aplicom. As well as data communications, each of the computers has Automatic Vehicle Location, where information is passed back to the control officer every 108 seconds.

Mike Baker of Siemens Datatrak said that Aplicom hardware was ideal for this application. "It has proved to be highly reliable, ideally suited to the type of interactive communications we need, and very easy to see and operate within the vehicle cab," he says.

The vehicle location and two-way data and interactive data communications system has been developed for Ontime Rescue and Recovery by Siemens Datatrak Location and Information Systems, of Swindon. Datatrak is a fully integrated automatic vehicle location and mobile data network. Siemens Datatrak is the global market leader for innovative terrestrial location and information systems, and currently expands its services into several countries in Europe.

Ontime is the largest rescue and recovery operator in the UK, covering parts of Sussex, Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Surrey. The business is an amalgamation of eight formerly independent operations and now has its headquarters in Hayes, Middlesex. Over 200,000 call-outs – including accidents, breakdowns and recoveries – are handled by Ontime each year.

Aplicom Oy

Aplicom Oy is the leading manufacturer of professional IT systems within vehicles in Europe. The Finnish-owned Aplicom designs and produces technologically advanced, fully programmable computer hardware for the vehicle environment, compatible with all recognised software systems, and which accommodate bespoke software packages.

Over 90 percent of Aplicom's products are exported. Aplicom's products are used by, among others, Schenker-BTL, DaimlerChrysler, many drivers' associations in Central Europe, the Norwegian Post, rural bus services and several ambulance trusts in the UK.

With Aplicom's products, companies can link vehicles into their information system. Their service improves and fleet management becomes more effective, which enhances their competitiveness in the market. A vehicle computer adds to safety and makes better following of vehicles' movements and condition possible.

Aplicom's research and development unit and the production department are located in Äänekoski, Finland. Selling and marketing functions are carried out in Helsinki, Finland.