

VEHICLE TRACKING SYSTEM WITH THEFT NOTIFICATION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the field of vehicle devices, and, more particularly, to a tracking and alerting system for a vehicle.

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Description of the Invention

The invention includes a unit to be mounted in the vehicle and a monitoring station. The unit in the vehicle includes a GPS receiver, and a transmitter which may transmit on the control band of the cellular telephone network, or, via a voice or other data channel of the cellular network, or other wireless communications network. For example, the transmitter could also be a satellite transmitter.

15 The GPS receiver determines the vehicle location. In addition, the GPS receiver may be connected to a controller which controls and/or performs a number of vehicle tracking and/or security functions. Wireless vehicle location determining devices and approaches other than GPS may also be used in some embodiments of the invention. For example, vehicle location systems based upon multiple receptions from adjacent cellular receivers can also be used.

20 The monitoring station is interfaced to the cellular telephone network, or other communications

network, to thereby communicate with the vehicle unit.
In addition, the monitoring station is also connected
to the Internet to provide a number of advantageous
features including updating the user or other authority
5 when away from the vehicle of the vehicle's position.
These features and advantages are described in further
detail below. The monitoring station may also be
connected to the telephone network in order to provide
various preprogrammed communications, such as to the
10 user or other authority.

The system preferably implements one or more
of the following features:

1. Detects the vehicle being stolen and
transmits a signal to the monitoring station
15 to contact up to 3 people, for example,
predetermined by the user, of theft of the
vehicle and starts tracking the vehicle. The
contact may be by one or more of the
following: an e-mail message, a pager alert,
20 a cellular telephone call, or other telephone
call.
2. Detects an optional vehicle alarm system
activation and transmits a signal to the
25 monitoring station to contact up to 3
predetermined people to inform them the
vehicle's alarm is being activated.
3. Detects an optional vehicle alarm systems
30 remote PANIC activation and transmits a
signal to the monitoring station to contact
up to 3 predetermined people to inform them
of the vehicle's PANIC being activated.

4. Detects a vehicle being programmed to operate from an unauthorized remote transmitter, key transponder, other transponder, or other device that has a unique coding, and the vehicle unit transmits a signal to the monitoring station to contact up to 3 predetermined people to inform them of this occurrence. The system can also make available information relating to a number of such coded devices, or a change therein, or when a change occurred. A message can be sent to the user or the information can be available to the user on the WEB site. The vehicle would be equipped with a security system as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,654,688, for example, which determines an unauthorized transmitter and provides an alert feature. This patent is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.
5. Detects the vehicle traveling over a predetermined speed, such as for a predetermined time, and transmits a signal to the monitoring station to send a message, such as an e-mail informing the user (and/or others) of this occurrence. Of course, the message could also be sent via a telephone call or page, should additional urgency be required. The vehicle's predetermined max speed limit and duration thereof can be selected by the user.
6. Detects a low battery voltage such as for a predetermined time and transmits a signal to the monitoring station to contact up to 3

predetermined people to inform them of vehicle's low battery voltage. This is especially advantageous during winter so that the vehicle could be started, for example, to prevent a problem before it happens). The time setting is selectable by the user.

7. Detects vehicle not moving for a predetermined time and transmits a signal to the monitoring station to send, for example, a nightly e-mail informing the user of all the vehicle's location and stationary time occurrences. The stationary time length is also selectable. This may be advantageous to encourage patrolling personnel not to remain for a long time in a same location.

8. The vehicle unit preferably includes a back-up battery system making it more reliable.

The vehicle unit may be relatively inexpensive. In addition, the monitoring fee that includes sending up to 60 e-mails and making up to 6 phone calls per month, may also be relatively low. The relatively low monitoring fee is based, at least in part, on the current relatively low rates charged for use of the control channel of the cellular telephone network. It is also noted that access to the control channel provides coverage for almost the entire U.S., for example.

The user also preferably has access to a WEB or Internet site that will display a map and silently contact the vehicle to acquire it's current location, speed, direction of travel, and previous multiple locations with speeds, for example, the user's personal identification number (PIN) can be instantly activated

by just a phone call. No additional installation is required.

Certain annual pre-pay package arrangement may be available. For example, up to 10 access entries
5 per month can be provided on a low monthly billing of \$4.90. Up to 30 access entries could be provided for \$8.25 per month.

The present invention provides a number of other significant advantages including optional access
10 from any phone or from any computer to access the WEB site. The user may control various vehicle functions remotely via the telephone or WEB site. The only charge may be for additional equipment and installation.

15 Additional features can also be included with the system and subscribed to by the user in accordance with the invention. For example, these include Hijack, Car Finding, Unlock Doors and Unauthorized Transmitter Alert Features. The equipment & installation is
20 relatively inexpensive, and is on the order of about \$190.00. For the hijack feature: from any phone or computer, the user may activate vehicle starter interrupt and sound the horn until the vehicle is retrieved (Command 4). For the Car Finding feature:
25 from any phone or computer, the user may activate the vehicle's horn, or siren and sound same for 30 seconds. This allows the user to find his vehicle in a crowded parking lot (Command 5). For the Lock/Unlock vehicle doors feature: from any phone or computer user a
30 predetermined command (Command 7) activates unlocking of vehicle doors to retrieve keys, for example, that may have been accidentally locked inside the vehicle. Of course, the system can also be used to lock vehicle doors if this was forgotten (Command 6). The

unauthorized transmitter alert feature is similarly selected as described above.

In addition, a remote vehicle start feature may also be provided, such as to start the vehicle's engine to heat or cool the vehicle prior to entry. The equipment and installation for remote starting may be relatively low.

Some further details of an embodiment of the vehicle unit are provided below as relating to use of red and green LED indicators operated by the system controller.

Red LED verification of GPS receiving signal, using the LED built into the system controller:

With yellow wire having positive 12 volts:

Blinking = when searching GPS location.
Constant = found location.
Off = no GPS signal found.

With yellow wire not having positive 12 volts:

Off = LED not functioning.

Green LED verification of receiving the cell tower signal, using the LED built into the system controller:

With yellow wire having positive 12 volts:

Blinking = Cell control channel signal is detected.
Constant = sending micro burst signal.
Stays on 5-seconds after each time system is transmitting.

Off = no cell tower signal received.

With yellow wire not having positive 12 volts:

Off = LED not functioning.

An example of representative DIP switch feature selection is as follows. Switch 1 may be used for adding orange wire for controlling arm/disarming of system. When On, the orange wire controls arm/disarm as follows: to arm, Orange wire is grounded and Yellow wire does not have 12 volts positive. To disarm, the Orange wire is not grounded. When switch 1 is Off, then only the Yellow wire controls arm /disarm as follows: to arm, the Yellow wire is without 12 volts positive, and 30 seconds after continued arm mode then orange wire activates a constant 500 ma grounded output to operate an external starter interrupt relay until system is disarmed. To disarm the Yellow wire is connected to 12 volts positive.

A main 5-pin plug may be provided on the vehicle unit and connected as follows:

The Red Wire is connected to 12 vdc Power. An alert warning "E" is given if the system is armed and the battery voltage becomes lower than 11-volts for longer than ## minutes. This alert feature "E" will not operate again until the voltage is above 12 volts to re-set this feature.

The Black Wire is connected to Ground.

The Yellow Wire is connected to the ignition 12 volts so that if the key is on, 12 volts is supplied thereto and if the key is off, the yellow wire is connected to ground. Further:

1. If the system is in an armed mode and Lat/Long changes, then Alert "A" is given.
2. If the system is disarmed and within 2.5 seconds after the yellow wire receives 12 volts and the gray wire detects 3 or more positive

pulses the system activates Alert "D".

3. If the DIP switch 1 is in the Off position then:

- a. if 12 volts is on yellow wire, the system is disarmed and the orange wire discontinues the 500 ma ground.
- b. if the yellow wire sees grounded or neutral, then the system is armed and 30 seconds after the continued arm mode the orange wire activates a constant 500 ma grounded output to operate an external starter interrupt relay until system is disarmed

The Gray Wire is for Input and Output, and can be connected to an alarm siren or horn positive terminal. In addition:

1. With system armed and if the Gray wire detects +12 v pulsing on/off or on constant for more than 10 seconds from an alarm siren or horn honking activation, then alert warning "B" alarm activation is given.
2. With system disarmed and if the Gray wire detects +12 v pulsing on/off or on constant for more than 10 seconds from an alarm siren or horn honking activation, then alert warning "C" panic activation is given.

- 5 3. With system disarmed and if the
 Gray wire detects 3 or more 12 volt
 positive pulses within 2.5 seconds
 of yellow wire receiving 12 v+ and
 the gray wire by-pass not being
 activated, then alert warning "D"
 is given.
- 10 4. The Gray wire bypass operates as
 follows:
 a. After Alert warning "B" bypass
 all future Alert "B" until system
 is disarmed.
 b. After Alert warning "C" bypass
 all future Alert "C" until system
15 is armed.
 c. After Alert warning "D" bypass
 all future Alert "D" until no 12
 volt pulses are detected on the
 gray wire within 3 seconds of
20 yellow wire having 12 volts.
5. With system armed or disarmed. The
 Output: Internal + 12v, 1 amp
 transistor with pulses 1 second on
 & 1 sec off to activate siren or
25 honk car horn or flashing light
 relay.
 a. Non-stop activation from
 (Command "4")
 b. 30-second activation from
30 (Command "5")
6. Turn off the above Alert "A" from
 (Command "1")

 The Orange Wire is for the starter interrupt
and arm/disarm system, and operates as follows:

- 35 1. If dip switch 1 is in the:

a. On position and:

- 5 i. the Orange wire has 12
 volts or neutral, the system
 switches to the disarmed mode
 ii. the Orange wire is
 grounded, then the system is
 switched to the armed mode
 iii. and the starter interrupt
10 output will not automatically
 operate. Can only be activated
 from "Command #4"

b. Off position and:

- 15 i. the Orange wire does not
 effect the arming or disarming
 of the system.
 ii. 30 seconds after system
 arms the Orange wire will
 automatically activate
 constant 500 ma ground until
20 the system is disarmed. And
 from "command #4". Connect to
 Starter interrupt relay
 output.

- 25 2. Command 4 activates Orange wire to
 have 500 ma. negative until Command
 1 is received.
 3. After Alert warning "B" is
 activated the first time it is
 thereafter bypassed while the
30 orange wire remains grounded. Alert
 warning "B" is re-set to operate
 again 3 seconds after orange wire
 becomes ungrounded.

35 The vehicle unit may also include a Door Lock
 Plug configured as follows, for example:

Green wire provides a 250 ma, negative 1 second pulse for Lock Doors. (Command "6"). Red Wire provides a constant 12v output from the Red power wire.

5 Blue wire provides a 250 ma., negative 1 second pulse for Unlock Doors (Command "7") Pink wire provides a 250ma., negative 1 second pulse for remote Car Starter (Command "2").

10 An installation Test Button may also be provided to work as follows. Pressing the button activates Orange wire for 10-seconds (starter interrupt), with these circuits in sequence:

15 First: Activates Gray wire for 1-second. (siren/horn)
After first stops: Activates Green wire for 1 second to lock the doors.
After second stops: Activate Blue wire for 1 second to unlock the doors.
20 After third stops: Activate Pink wire for 1 second to activate optional item.

Representative warning alerts are as follows:

Alert Warning "A": Automatic activation of "Command 8" and the vehicle unit contacts monitor
25 station to instantly call 3 phone numbers with the message "Your Vehicle is stolen please confirm then call 911 to advise police of web site and your pin # so police can locate the vehicle". This is detected with the system armed and the GPS indicating movement.
30 Bypasses all future alert warning "A" until the system is re-armed.

Alert Warning "B": the vehicle unit contacts the monitoring station to instantly call 3 phone numbers with the following message "Vehicle alarm
35 activated please confirm". This is with the system

armed and detecting Gray wire having 12 volts pulsing
or on constant for longer than 10-seconds). After
Alert warning "B" is activated the first time, it is
thereafter bypassed while the orange wire remains
5 grounded. Alert warning "B" is re-set to operate again
3 seconds after orange wire becomes ungrounded.

Alert Warning "C": the vehicle unit contacts
the monitoring station to instantly call 3 phone
numbers with the message "Vehicle PANIC activated
10 please confirm". This is with system disarmed and
detecting the Gray wire having 12 volts pulsing or on
constant for longer than 10-seconds. After the first
activation then this is bypassed until the ignition
turns on again.

15 Alert Warning "D": the vehicle unit contacts
the monitoring station to instantly call 3 phone
numbers with the this message "Unauthorized remote
transmitter was just programmed to operate your
vehicle." This is with the system disarmed and the
20 Gray wire detecting three or more 12 volt pulses within
2.5 seconds of yellow wire having seen 12 volts
positive. All future alert "D" are bypassed until no
12 volt pulses are detected on the gray wire within 3
seconds of the yellow wire seeing 12 volts.

25 Alert Warning "E": the vehicle unit contacts
the monitoring station to instantly call 3 phone
numbers with the message "Vehicle has low battery
voltage and system has changed to low voltage mode".
This is with the system armed and detecting the Red
30 wire with lower than 11 volts for ## minutes. All
future alert "E" are bypassed until:

1. First: More than 13.5 volts are detected
on the red wire and

2. Second: After yellow wire stops having positive voltage the red wire then must detects more than 12 volts.

Alert Warning "F": the vehicle unit contacts
5 the monitoring station to instantly send e-mail message
"vehicle was traveling faster than your preset amount
of "###"and time limit of "##"seconds. Indicates the
vehicle speed and location that the speeding started
and how long speeding accrued" (Detected from GPS)

10 The following are representative commands for
use in the system:

Command 1: Reset all circuits and system
remains asleep until the
ignition key is turned on.
15 Resets the triggered mode and
unit is asleep to prevent
power drain on vehicle
battery.

Command 2: (Accessory activation)
20 monitoring station Command to
the system to activate Pink
wire to pulse 250 ma negative
for 1 second.

Command 3: (Vehicle Location) Web site to
25 indicate present location and
past events in memory.

Command 4: (Hijack or Stolen) monitoring
station Command to vehicle
system to activate:

30 a. Gray wire to pulse 1sec on/1 sec
off with 1 amp positive output and
which continues until receive
command # 1.

b. Orange wire to have 500 ma ground and which continues until receive command # 1.

5 Command 5: (Car Find) monitoring station
Command to system activating
Gray wire for 30 seconds
pulsing 1 sec on/1 sec off
with 1 amp positive output.

10 Command 6: (Lock Doors) monitoring
station Command to system
activating Green wire to pulse
1 second with 250 ma.
negative.

15 Command 7: (Unlock Doors) monitoring
station Command to system to
activate Blue wire to pulse 1
second with 250ma. negative.

20 Command 8: (Start Constant Vehicle
Tracking) sends previous 2
events in memory and then
every 120 seconds get update
of location information sent
to the Web site.

The system is also operable in a battery
25 saver mode which operates as follows:

a) With the ignition key off, if the battery
voltage drops below 11.5 volts for more than
5 seconds, the GPS verification wakes up to
look:

30 i) Once instantly.
ii) Once in 1 hour if at the same
location.
iii) Once in 6 hours if at the same
location.

iv) Once in 12 hours if at the same location.

v) Once every 24 hours if at the same location.

5 b) Activate alert "E" when the battery saver mode is activated, and bypass sending all future Alert "E" until the battery voltage goes above 13 volts for 10 minutes to reset this feature.

10 Another aspect of the invention relates to automatic vehicle alert e-mails sent containing some or all of the previous system events. This sending can be triggered as follows:

15 a) At a user selected predetermined time ## (01-24) of each day, or
 b) At a predetermined memory fill level, such as full or near full.

 In addition, each system event may contains one or more of the following:

20 a) Vehicle Location
 b) Vehicle total time at location
 c) Time of day
 d) Mph traveling
 e) Total time traveling above MPH
25 f) Direction traveling
 g) Delta
 h) Special Alert messages, if any, including:
 i) GPS signal not received for longer than 5 minutes.
30 ii) Traveling above ###MPH for ## minutes.
 iii) Vehicle is stolen.
 iv) Alarm activated.
 v) Unauthorized remote transmitter
35 alert.

vi) Battery saver mode activated
vii) Command 1: Reset all circuits and
system remains asleep until the ignition
key is turned on.

5 viii) Command 2: (Accessory activation)

ix) Command 3: (Vehicle Location was
retrieved)

x) Command 4: (Hijack or Stolen mode
activated)

10 xi) Command 5: (Car Find mode activated)

xii) Command 6: (Locked Doors)

xiii) Command 7: (Unlocked Doors)

xiv) Command 8: (Started 2-second
incremental Vehicle Tracking)

15 Another feature of the invention relates to
the selectable threshold conditions causing an event to
be recorded into the memory of the vehicle unit. For
example, this may include:

20 a) While the yellow wire has 12 volts, record
events every "??" default 15 minutes time if
the GPS location has changed. If the GPS
location is same then only update stationary
total time.

25 b) If the GPS antenna is not receiving any
signal:

30 i) Then enter last known GPS location
and with indication this was the last
known GPS location before GPS signal
stopped and how long no GPS signal was
received. And enter GPS location in the
on-hold file.

c) When vehicle is traveling above ###MPH for
##-minutes.

The monitoring station may also provide a number of automated phone calls as described above. These include

- 5 a) The user's vehicle has issued a stolen alert:
- 10 i) If vehicle is stolen, after receiving the phone message the user then calls 911 to advise police of the theft, and gives the police the Web site address and an identification number, such as the user's PIN, to allow the police to locate where your vehicle has been, where it is now and keep tracking it until the police can retrieve the
- 15 vehicle.
- ii) If this is a false alert due to vehicle being towed away for service, for example, then the user may press "1" to put the vehicle in an off mode. Once
- 20 the ignition key is turned on again the system will reset back to its normal operation mode.
- b) The user's vehicle has issued an alarm activated for more than 10 seconds alert.
- 25 The system will not respond to this alert again until ignition key is turned on again to reset this feature.
- c) The vehicle battery voltage is low or has been disconnected. The tracking system is in
- 30 low voltage mode. The system will not respond to this alert again until the battery voltage goes above 13 volts for 10 minutes to reset this feature.

The backup battery may be sized according to the GPS receiver and processing power draw. In addition, the battery may also be sized based upon estimated micro burst transmitting power draw. Such transmission are typically at about 3 watts power to the antenna.

The system according to the invention including the vehicle unit and monitoring station provides a number of significant advantages and features. For example, the police may be directly contacted by the user when the vehicle is stolen. The user receives the telephone message from the monitoring station, and this is done without requiring the intervention of a manual security monitoring operator, such as an ADT operator, for example. In addition, once in the stolen mode, the vehicle unit will periodically continue to send out its location, so that the police may track the vehicle via the WEB, for example. This location sending feature begins immediately, that is, without requiring the user to contact the vehicle to begin tracking. Having the vehicle contacting the monitoring station is considerably less expensive than other schemes where the vehicle is periodically polled via the cellular network, for example.

The system may also be interfaced to a breath alcohol sensor at the vehicle, for example, and this information recorded in memory. The information could be passed along to the monitoring station, which, in turn, could send out a notification message (e-mail or telephone) that the vehicle is being operated by a driver who may be impaired by alcohol. The vehicle's location could then be tracked to permit the police to detain the driver.

The device or unit may be initially manufactured and shipped without all of the features being fully functional. One advantage of this is to prevent the unit at will from sending messages when being initially installed and tested in the vehicle, thereby reducing potential false alarms and burdens on the communications system, as well as potential charges to the user. After the unit is fully installed, a communication or transmission from the monitoring center may be sent to the unit enabling one or more selected features, such as during registration during which information is conveyed to the monitoring center and payment is made or authorized by the user.

Another aspect of the unit is that it may be able to recognize the desirability to bypass certain security breach triggers or other events. For example, a car finding feature can be provided that will allow the user to sound the horn or siren when near the vehicle to help locate the vehicle, as in a crowded parking area. Without the bypass feature, the unit could recognize the horn or siren as a security breach and transmit such information to the monitoring center. In accordance with this aspect of the invention, the unit would recognize the car finding feature was activated and thereby bypass sending a security breach transmission, for example. Again, false alarms and unneeded usage and expense of the communications infrastructure would be avoided.

Yet another aspect of the invention relates to thwarting a would-be thief who attempts to disable the alarm by cutting the battery cable or power supplied to the system. The unit preferably includes a back-up battery. More particularly, upon being in an armed mode and sensing a breach of security, such as

the hood opening, for example, the unit will send out a signal indicating the alarm or security breach and while the alarm is indicated, if the battery is disconnected then the unit will send out a message
5 indicating the vehicle is stolen, and also providing the vehicle's current position. Accordingly, the would-be thief is not able to defeat the security system by quickly disrupting power to the unit during an alarm indication or security breach. Also to prevent
10 additional alerts, this message is prevented from being transmitting again until user returns to the vehicle to disarm the system and/or turn on the ignition so that the unit sees a voltage above 13.volts indicating the vehicle has started using the owner's ignition key.
15 This aspect is further understood with reference to the enclosed flowchart labeled "Alert A".

Still another aspect of the invention relates to how the unit can discriminate between ordinary usage or honking of the horn as compared to a security system
20 triggered alarm. Most vehicle security systems will provide a pattern of horn soundings as an alarm indication, and this can be determined and used to reduce false alarm transmissions from the unit. For example, the unit can look at the number of leading and
25 trailing edges of the power pulse used to sound the horn. A single pressing of the horn switch by the user will cause two edges within a predetermined time, such as about 10 to 12 seconds. Accordingly, the unit can be configured to not send a security breach transmission
30 to the control center based upon detecting two transitions. Since a number of vehicle security systems may have a continuous sounding of the horn within the predetermined time, the unit can send the transmission upon detecting only a single transition. A number of
35 other vehicle security systems provide a series of

pulses or horn soundings within the predetermined time. Accordingly, the unit may also be configured to send a security breach transmission upon detecting greater than a predetermined number of transitions, such as
5 greater than nine, for example. This number is also typically higher than a user would generate honking the horn several times within the predetermined time. In other terms, the number of transitions of the horn pulses can be counted, and if equal to one, or greater
10 than nine, for example, the transmission is triggered, and otherwise the sounding of the horn is ignored. Also to prevent additional alerts, this message is prevented from being transmitting again until user returns to the vehicle to disarm the system and/or turn on the
15 ignition so that the unit sees a voltage above 13.volts indicating the vehicle has started using the owner's ignition key. This aspect is further understood with reference to the enclosed flowchart labeled "Alert B".

Yet another feature of the invention relates
20 to a low vehicle battery alert. For example, the unit may monitor the battery voltage over a predetermined time such as ten minutes. The ten minute window prevents false tripping, for example, when the voltage dips during engine cranking. In particular, the voltage
25 can be sensed and determined whether it is greater than zero (eg. greater than six volts)and less than a high value (eg. eleven or twelve volts), and, if so, a low battery voltage transmission can be communicated to the monitoring station, and ultimately to the vehicle user
30 when away from the vehicle. If vehicle is being serviced and battery is disconnected this will cause the battery voltage to be equal to zero, then the low battery voltage transmission will not be communicated to the monitoring station. Also to prevent additional
35 alerts, this message is prevented from being

transmitting again until user returns to the vehicle to disarm the system and/or turn on the ignition so that the unit sees a voltage above 13.volts indicating the vehicle has started using the owner's ignition key.

- 5 Again false triggerings are reduced. This aspect is further understood with reference to the enclosed flowchart labeled "Alert E".

Yet another advantageous feature of some embodiments of invention relates to the ability to
10 conserve electrical power. More particularly, when the vehicle is stopped and in the armed mode, the GPS receiver may be periodically operated to determine the vehicle position. If the vehicle position changes, this is indicative that the vehicle is being moved or
15 stolen. For example, the GPS receiver may be operated to generate new vehicle position information every 29 seconds. These relatively quick successive position determinations or readings are generally termed hot start. These are relatively less complicated than a
20 cold start position determination which takes longer, since the cold start position determination requires greater time to acquire and receive data from multiple satellites, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.

25 Unfortunately, this relatively high repeated usage of the GPS receiver may cause unnecessary battery drain, especially when the vehicle is left armed and unattended by the user for an extended period. Accordingly, the power conserving feature of the
30 invention permits the GPS receiver to be turned off when the vehicle is in the armed mode, and the GPS receiver is turned on only when needed. For example, a vehicle sensor, such as a shock sensor, motion sensor, ignition sensor, door sensor, or other sensor, or

combinations thereof could be used to start the GPS receiver. This sensor could also be used to trigger an alarm if desired; however it need not be so used in all embodiments. The GPS receiver, once turned on, could
5 operate in the normal periodic fashion as described above, or for a fixed period of time. The GPS receiver could also be turned off again after some predetermined time if no further sensor signal is received, or if the position fails to change on subsequent position
10 readings or determinations.

Yet another feature of the invention relates to permitting more colorful audible alert messages to be generated for the user. The user can, in some embodiments, access an internet site to type or enter
15 the text for a message to be sent, such as to alert the user that his vehicle is being stolen. The audible message then communicated by a telephone call to the user is generated by a speech message synthesizer based upon the entered text. In accordance with this aspect
20 of the invention, the user could type in phonetically spelled words or phrases, such as to create more colorful messages including slang terms, various accents, and/or to mimic various dialects, for example. The speech synthesizer would then generate the desired
25 message customized for the user. Of course, the system could also permit the user to test or preview the pronunciation generated by the speech message synthesizer based on the entered text message prior to its adoption.

30 Yet another advantageous feature of the invention relates to interfacing with a factory-installed security system. In accordance with this aspect of the invention, the purpose is to detect when the factory security or alarm system is triggered so

that the user can be notified when away from the vehicle using the capabilities of the tracking and security system described herein. The tracking system would include a voltage and/or current sensing circuit
5 connected to detect repetitive battery spikes based upon an electrical item being turned on and off at the vehicle.

More particularly, with the with the GPS-2000 tracking system armed and the ignition key in the off
10 condition, if the vehicle factory alarm becomes triggered, it causes the car horn and lights to flash and/or the horn to honk. Accordingly, the detector circuit can detect these indications as either dips in the voltage or increases in current flow from the
15 vehicle battery. If these electrical events are detected for a predetermined minimum time of about 30 seconds, for example, and not longer than a predetermined maximum time of about 63 seconds, for example, the GPS-2000 tracker will send the vehicle
20 alarm activated message.

The circuitry for detecting a voltage dip, for example, is of a type commonly included in other conventional vehicle security systems for other purposes, such as detecting tampering, for example.
25 This detection circuitry needs no further description herein.

As will be readily appreciated by those skilled in the art, the reason for the minimum and maximum times is to avoid false alarms. For example, a
30 similar electrical condition can be generated as the car radiator fan cycles on and off after the engine is turned off. By waiting the predetermined minimum time of about 30 seconds, the tracker would not falsely determine this to be operation of the factory security

system. Opening and closing of the car doors could also create a similar electrical system drain, but would be unlikely to extend for 30 seconds. Accordingly, the minimum time would also avoid a false alarm in this instance of opening and closing the vehicle doors.

The maximum predetermined time could be implemented to avoid flashing operation of the hazard lights, for example, from causing a false alarm. A typical factory alarm would flash the lights and/or honk the horn for about 60 seconds before stopping. Flashing of the hazard lights would likely be for more than about 63 seconds, for example. Accordingly, a false alarm indication based on operation of the hazard lights would also be avoided by the invention.

As will also be appreciated by those skilled in the art, different values for the minimum and maximum times are contemplated by the invention. In addition, in some embodiments only one of the minimum or maximum times may be used.

Another aspect of the invention relates to a user's ability to cancel further sequential notifications. More particularly, in response to an alarm alert, sequential notifications are typically given by sequentially calling a series of telephone numbers. In accordance with this aspect of the invention, the user who receives the call, may cancel any further notifications. In other words, the user can be prompted by voice messages to make a certain keypad entry to thereby cancel further notifications if desired. This can avoid additional telephone or system usage charges, and also reduces the possible nuisance of unnecessary calls to other persons.

Stopping further notifications upon merely determining that the telephone has been answered may be ineffective, since oftentimes an answering machine may receive the call. Accordingly, it may be preferred to have the user actively cancel further notifications, in contrast to merely stopping further calls upon determining that the telephone call has been completed.

Another aspect of the invention relates to requesting GPS position information from a vehicle. If a command is sent downstream to the vehicle requesting that GPS information in turn be sent upstream from the vehicle, and the GPS information is not received within a predetermined time, such as about four minutes, then another command may be sent to the vehicle requesting the GPS information. This may keep repeating until GPS information is received, for a predetermined number of tries, or until a user instructs stopping of the requests. This helps to ensure and confirm the activation and reception of GPS tracking coordinates from the vehicle.

Yet another aspect of the invention relates to reducing a frequency with which GPS information is sent from the vehicle. More particularly, the unit may be configured to activate GPS information transmission upstream every 2 minutes. To reduce system usage expense and power consumption at the vehicle, this rate of transmission of GPS information could be progressively decreased over time. For example, in one embodiment, upon activation the GPS location signals could be sent every 2 minutes during the first hour, then once an hour for the next 23 hours, after which only one signal would be sent per day.

Still another aspect of the invention relates to warning the user of an inoperable or malfunctioning

GPS or cellular telephone section. More particularly, if the GPS or cellular telephone antenna wire is cut or the mounting position of either is changed causing the antenna to stop receiving the signal the user would not ordinarily know of this problem quickly. In accordance with one embodiment, if the ignition is turned on a predetermined number of times, such as about three, and each time ignition turns on if no GPS or no cell signal is received for a minimum time, such as about 15 to 30 minutes or longer, an audible warning beeper may be activated in the vehicle. This beeper may be sounded once ever 15-minutes. At anytime if the GPS or cell signal is received properly then the system re-sets automatically stopping the beeper sound.

As an example, if the ignition key is turned on and no GPS or no Cell signal is being received for 15-minutes, and the vehicle ignition stays on for 45-minutes and there is still no GPS or no cell signal, the unit counts one. Thereafter, if the ignition key is turned on and no GPS or no cell signal is being received for 15-minutes, and the vehicle ignition stays on for 60-minutes and there is still no GPS or no cell signal, a second count is determined. Thereafter, if the ignition is turned on and no GPS or no cell signal is received for 10-minutes, and the vehicle ignition stays on for only 10-minutes and there is still no GPS or no cell signal, no count is determined. Thereafter, if the ignition is turned on and no GPS or no cell signal is being received for 15-minutes, a third count is determined and the beeper is activated as described above. This beeping may continue every 15-minutes while the vehicle ignition stays on as long as the vehicle ignition stays on for 16-minutes and still no GPS or no Cell signal is being received. If thereafter, the ignition is turned on and no GPS or no cell signal

is being received, the beeper beeps once and again beeps once every 15-minutes while vehicle ignition stays on. If in 10-minutes both GPS or cell signal is being received, the beeper system is turned off and the warning count is reset.

In examples, if the ignition key is turned on and no GPS or no cell signal is being received for only 5, 10 or 12 minutes (with the threshold set at 15 minutes), then no count is determined.

10 In certain circumstances, the GPS signal may fail, but the cell signal may still be working. Accordingly, it may be desirable to send an indication of the failure of the GPS signal to the central monitoring station to thereby alert the user as
15 described above. If the cell signal also failed, or if the cell signal failed by itself, in other embodiments a separate paging device would transmit the failure or loss of the cell signal information to the central monitoring station, to thereby alert the user.

20 Another aspect of the invention relates to having the capability to interface the tracker device with a siren and/or the vehicle horn. Typically the siren is locally connected to ground, such as in the engine compartment, and the output of the tracker unit
25 would provide a positive supply voltage, eg. 12 volts, to drive the siren. Also typically, the vehicle horn is connected to the positive voltage supply, and pressing the horn switch connects the horn to the vehicle ground to thereby complete the circuit and
30 sound the horn. In accordance with this aspect of the invention, the output drive of the tracker unit can be a single wire with pulses of alternating polarity.

More particularly, the output terminal or wire, eg. the gray wire as described above, supplies

pulses of alternating polarity. For example, a first pulse can be at the positive supply voltage, and a second pulse can be at the vehicle ground. Each pulse can be about one-half to one second long. The pulses
5 can alternate in a series and with a slight spacing between adjacent pulses. In other security type systems, an intervening relay may be provided to provide for dual polarity capability. However, the tracker unit desirably monitors activation of the horn
10 wire to determine whether the factory or aftermarket security controller is sounding an alarm. The intervening relay would prevent such a determination. Accordingly, the circuitry for providing the alternating polarity pulses of the invention provides
15 the dual compatibility and also permits sensing of the horn activation as described above. Thus, the invention provides the dual compatibility with a single output wire or terminal, and requires no special installation.

20 Yet another aspect of the invention relates to power conservation and extending the protection period provided by the tracking device when the vehicle is not being used. The GPS receiver of the device may operate down to a supply voltage of about 3 volts,
25 while the cellular radio portion may require a voltage of at least about 11 volts or 11.2 volts. The device will also typically include a back-up battery. The back-up battery may provide power when the vehicle battery is disconnected, such as by a would-be thief,
30 or otherwise.

Typical vehicle security systems, for example, connect the back-up battery in parallel with the vehicle electrical system. Of course when the vehicle is operating, the vehicle battery and back-up

battery are being charged by the alternator, which, in turn, is driven by the vehicle engine. When the vehicle is not used for a relatively long period of time, the voltage of both the back-up battery and the vehicle battery will gradually decay, such as based upon the receiver in the security system continuing to operate. Fortunately, however, the conventional vehicle security system may operate down to a voltage of about 6 volts. Accordingly, although the back-up battery voltage has decayed (along with the parallel connected vehicle battery), the relatively low operating voltage for the security system is still typically sufficient to permit proper operation for a relatively long period of time.

15 The tracking device in accordance with the invention will typically include the cellular radio portion which requires a relatively high 11 volts or so to continue to operate. The tracking unit, despite various other power conserving features discussed herein, will still draw current. Accordingly, the voltage of the vehicle battery will also decay over time as the user is away from the vehicle. In accordance with this aspect of the invention, the back-up battery, however, is not continuously connected in parallel with the vehicle battery. Instead, the back-up battery is connected in parallel when the ignition key is on, for example, which will provide for charging of the back-up battery. Initially, when the vehicle is turned off, and the system armed, the back-up battery is not connected. Rather, the vehicle battery alone supplies the device initially. The back-up battery thus remains fully charged as it is not being drained by the load of the tracking device.

In one embodiment, if sufficient time passes, then the voltage of the battery will decay below a predetermined value, such as about 11.5 or 11.2 volts, for example. At this point, the back-up battery will be
5 connected to the tracking device, and the vehicle battery will be disconnected. These voltage sensing and switching functions can be readily implemented using conventional circuits in the tracking device as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.
10 Accordingly, the tracking device can continue to operate normally for an additional period and at a sufficiently high voltage to permit the cellular radio to operate. Of course, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, this feature can be extended to
15 other areas as well, especially where a vehicle device or circuit may require a relatively high operating voltage.

In other embodiments, if sufficient time passes, then the voltage of the battery will decay
20 below a predetermined value, such as about 11.5 to 4-volts, for example. At this point, the back-up battery will stay disconnected from the tracking device, and the vehicle battery will stay connected. This allows the cellular radio to sleep at 11.5 volts and the GPS
25 and other circuits to still operate from the vehicle battery to as low as 3-volts. Once an alert is detected from GPS or other circuits then the cellular radio is awakened and operates from the back-up battery, still at about 12-volts. These voltage sensing and switching
30 functions can be readily implemented using conventional circuits in the tracking device as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the tracking device can continue to operate normally for alerts to be sent to the monitoring station for an additional
35 period and at a sufficiently high voltage to permit the

cellular radio to operate. Of course, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, this feature can be extended to other areas as well, especially where a vehicle device or circuit may require a
5 relatively high operating voltage.

Yet another feature of the invention is directed to efficient use of a relatively small number of codes available to communicate with the tracking unit from the cellular network and central station.
10 More particularly, a typical arrangement may provide eight basic codes and two "wildcard" codes. The two wildcard codes are reserved for future or other uses. A particular tracking device will respond directly to any of the eight basic codes. For example, the doors
15 could be locked or unlocked, a present location downloaded from the vehicle, etc.

In accordance with this feature of the invention, the tracking device may respond differently to the same code or command depending upon the state or
20 condition of the tracking device. For example, if an alarm is triggered at the vehicle, it may be desired that the tracking device continue to send the alarm signal until confirmation is received that the central monitoring station has received the alarm signal. This
25 confirmation can be sent using the same code as may provide another function if the device were not indicating an alarm. Any of a number of such tracking device conditions may trigger a different message to be interpreted from the received code. For example, if
30 any of the above Alerts A-E were triggered, the receipt of a predetermined code, such as code eight, would confirm receipt of the alert by the central station, and this receipt of code eight would not cause the other response (no alarm triggered) in the tracking

device. Of course this concept can be extended to other features as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.

In accordance with another feature of the invention, the rate of sending the location or position data (or change in position data) from the vehicle may be varied to reduce system usage and thereby reduce expenses. More particularly, in one embodiment, the rate of sending may be based upon how long the vehicle has remained stationary. This time period may be selected by the user. For example, the selected time may be in the range of 15 minutes to six hours. If the vehicle has been stationary for the selected time period, then the rate of transmission may be reduced. This reduces or eliminates the need to send home position data and send all the over 15-minute stops made that day. Otherwise, that is when the vehicle is moving, the device may send data at a faster rate. Of course, a system user would not likely be interested in quick updates, especially where the position information is not changing. Conversely, if the vehicle is being moved, it may be desirable to receive more frequent position updates.

Another variation of this transmission rate conservation feature, bases the rate of transmission on the vehicle position. For example, a reduced rate of transmission may be selected if the vehicle is in a predetermined area where the user has a lesser interest in quickly updated position information. The user may also have a reduced interest in an area that can be defined outside of a predetermined distance from a reference point.

Yet another variation of the vehicle position transmission rate conservation feature is based upon

the vehicle's speed, such as the vehicle's average or maximum speed, for example. Accordingly, if the vehicle is traveling above a preset speed, the rate of transmission may be increased.

5 In accordance with another aspect of the invention, an alert may be generated based upon the vehicle detecting an acceleration beyond a predetermined level. The vehicle acceleration could readily be determined by a relatively inexpensive
10 acceleration sensor as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art. The acceleration could also be calculated by speedometer information. Decelerations, or negative accelerations, could also be used to trigger an alert. The acceleration generated alert
15 could be used to reduce wear and tear on the vehicle or to discourage aggressive driving and especially Drag Racing . The acceleration alert need not be generated and sent immediately, but could be sent with position information, since a user may not need realtime
20 notification of the acceleration limit being exceeded.

Yet another aspect of the invention is directed to ensuring that car owners will activate the monitoring service from the beginning and not wait months or years until the vehicle is stolen, for
25 example, to then activation the system in an attempt to avoid monthly service charges. When power is initially connected to the device it will communicate with the cellular equipment. Unfortunately, it may be virtually impossible to sort out all of the communications
30 traffic to determine when someone has obtained a vehicle with the unit, but has not fully registered or subscribed to the service. In accordance with this aspect of the invention, a driver annoyance may be triggered to encourage the driver or owner to register

the unit and begin paying the monthly service fees.
For example, an annoying chirp could be generated every
ten minutes when the vehicle ignition is on.
Alternately or additionally a visual annoyance could
5 also be provided. The audio chirp could be readily
provided by a small piezoelectric indicator carried by
the device.

In accordance with another aspect of the
invention, the tracking device may send the alert
10 indication a predetermined number of times without
receiving an acknowledgment as described above, and
then wait until the vehicle position has changed before
trying again or the cell re-registers or its RSS
(received signal strength) changes. Thus, power is
15 conserved. When the vehicle has moved to a new
position, any obstructions may no longer be present
thereby increasing the likelihood of a successful
communication. In addition, the change in position may
be determined when the vehicle is sensed to be moving
20 about a predetermined relatively small speed, such as
greater than 1 mph, for example.

In all of the embodiments and variations
described herein, the tracking device may communicate
with one or more other vehicle devices via a vehicle
25 data communications bus. Further aspects of
interfacing with a vehicle data communications bus are
described in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,719,551 and 6,011,460
assigned to the assignee of the present invention.

Alert "A" = Vehicle Stolen Alert

Vehicle stolen is determined two ways by vehicle monitoring:

1. Tracking system armed and vehicle location goes beyond 100' G.O Fencing range.
2. Tracking system Armed and Vehicle alarm is triggered and vehicle battery voltage is 0-volts.

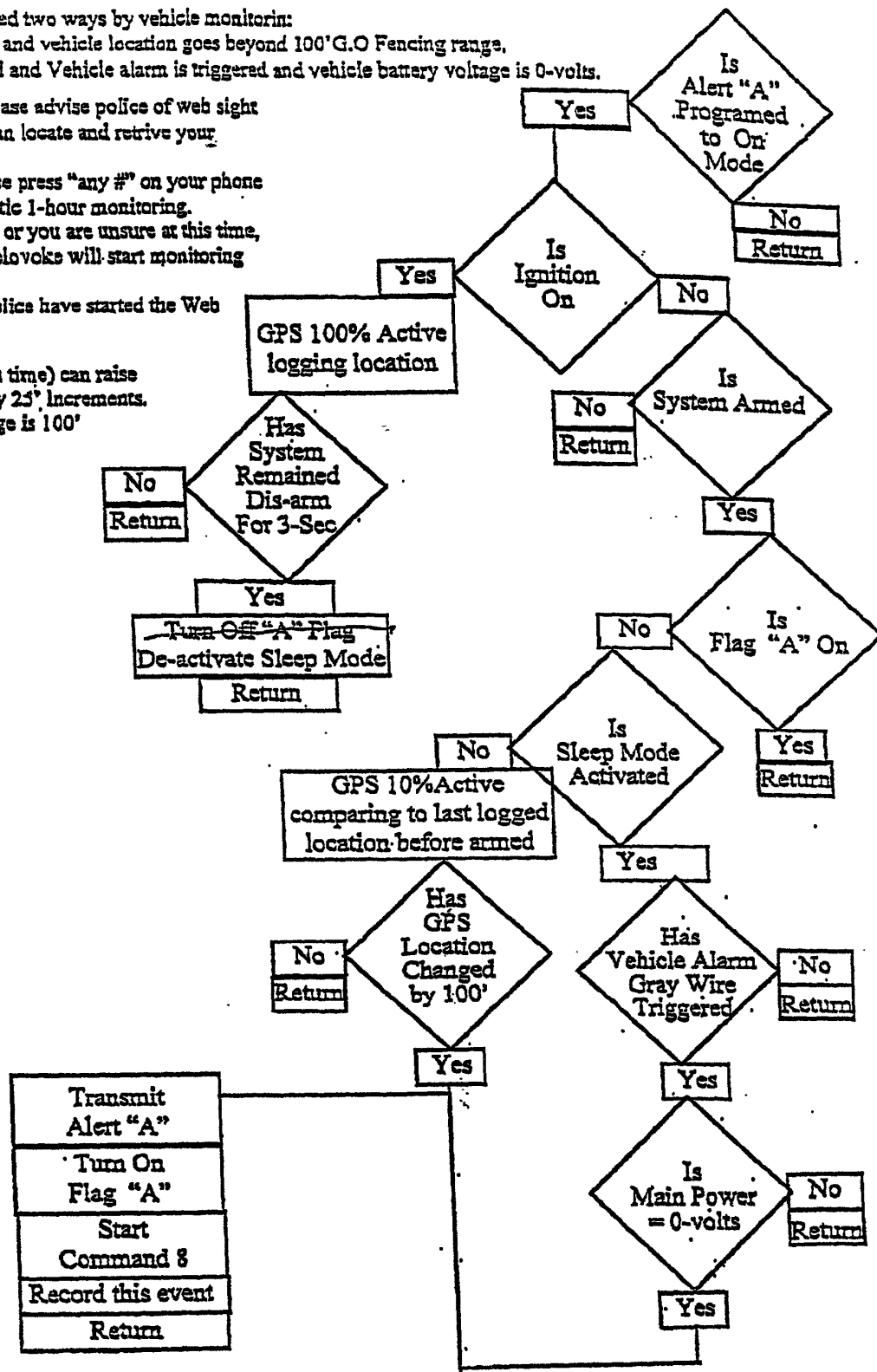
Your vehicle is stolen, please advise police of web sight and your pin# so police can locate and retrieve your vehicle.

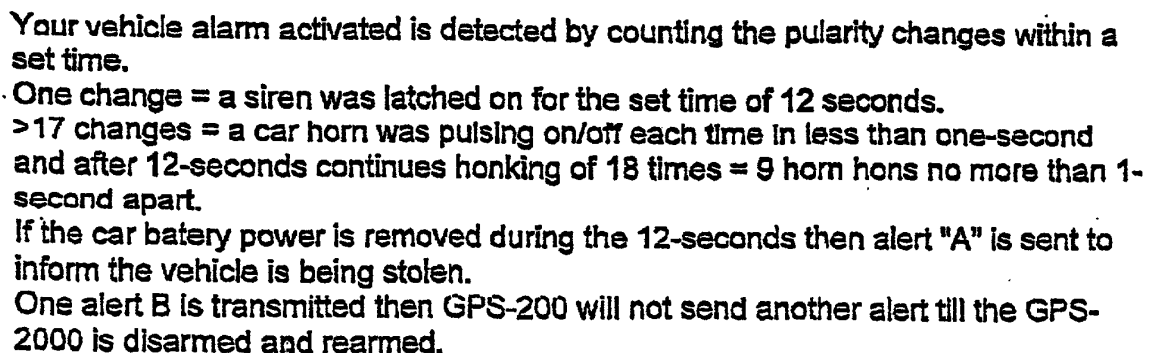
If this is a false alert please press "any #" on your phone now to deactivate automatic 1-hour monitoring.

If vehicle has been stolen or you are unsure at this time, hang up an call police. Telovoke will start monitoring for upto

1-hour vehicle or until police have started the Web monitoring.

Telovoke (not user at this time) can raise or lower G.O.Fencing by 25' increments. G.O Fencing default range is 100'



[illegible]

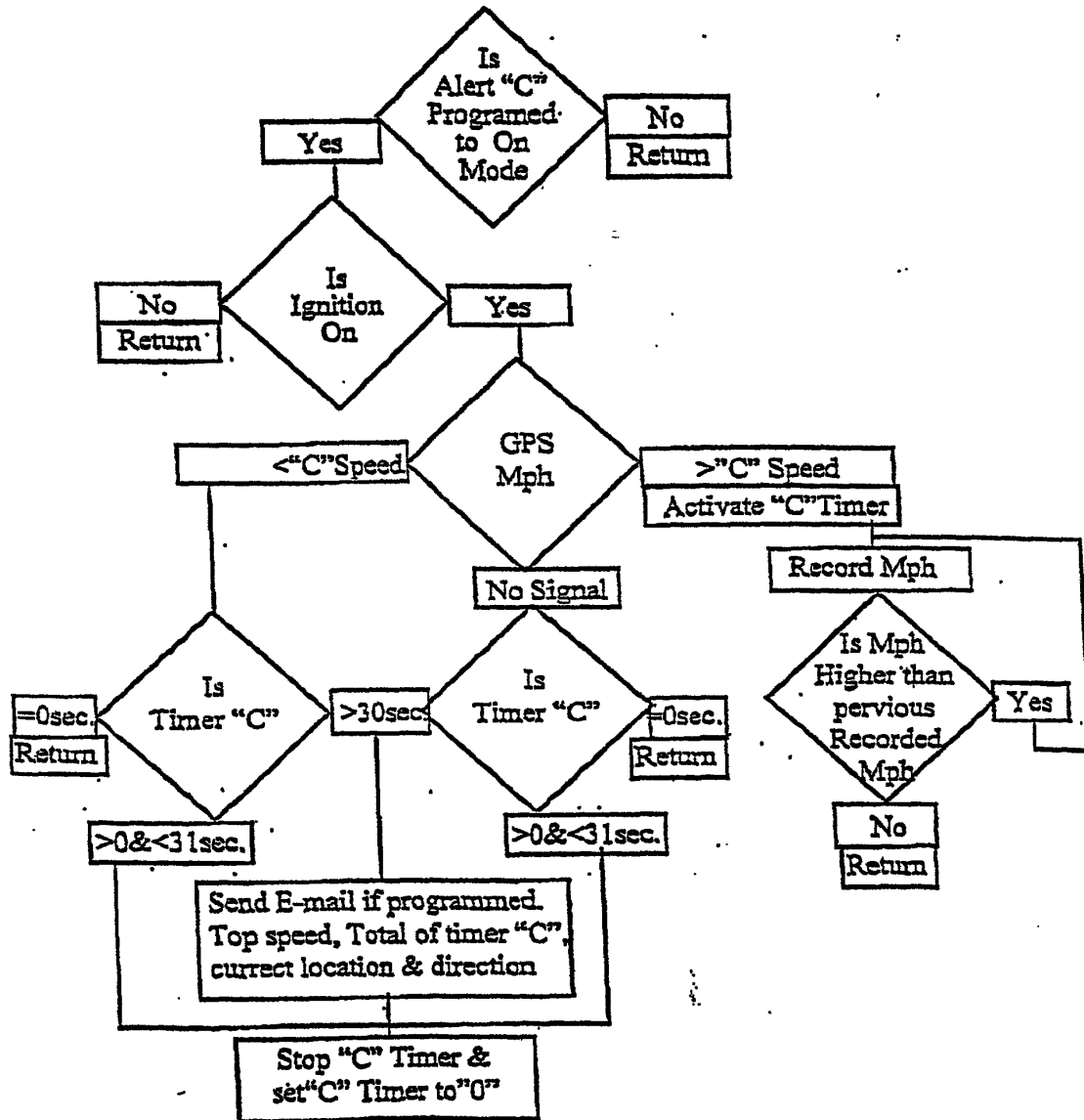
Alert "C" = Speeding Too Long Of Time

Vehicle was traveling faster than 80 m.p.h. for a longer time than 30 seconds. GPS indicates the speed. If pre-programmed to do so, records this as an event and will send e-mail instantly of Top speed, total time, direction and location speeding had stopped.

Alert "C" operation can be turned on or off by user

80 M.p.h. is default speed. Televoke (not user at this time) can raise or lower the speed by 5 m.p.h. increments.

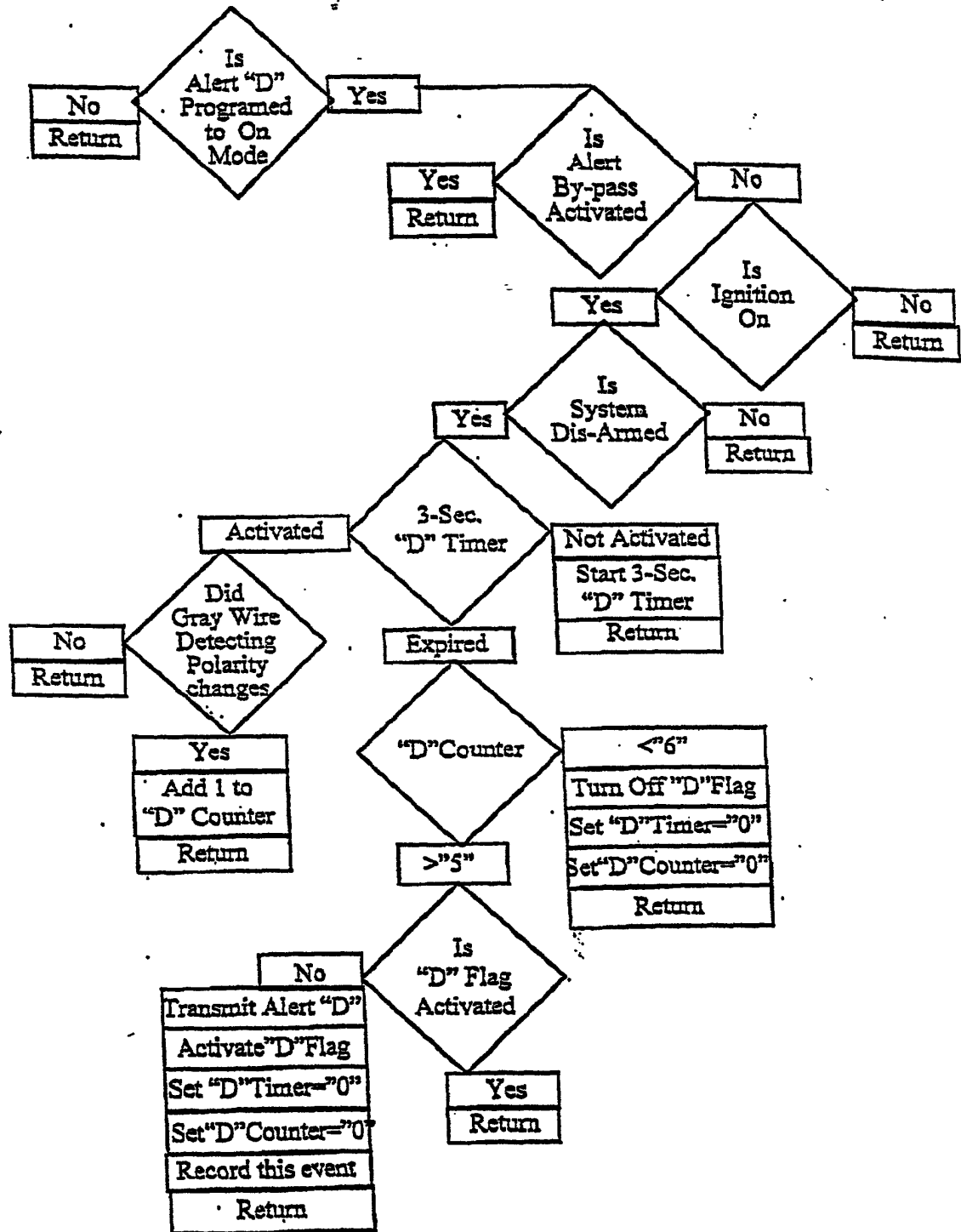
30-seconds time is default. Televoke (not user at this time) can raise or lower the time by 5 minutes increments.



Alert "D" = Unauthorized Transmitter Alert

Your vehicle was programmed to operate from a new ignition key or remote transmitter. Please take proper action. This alert will not be sent again till the vehicles alert signal stops.

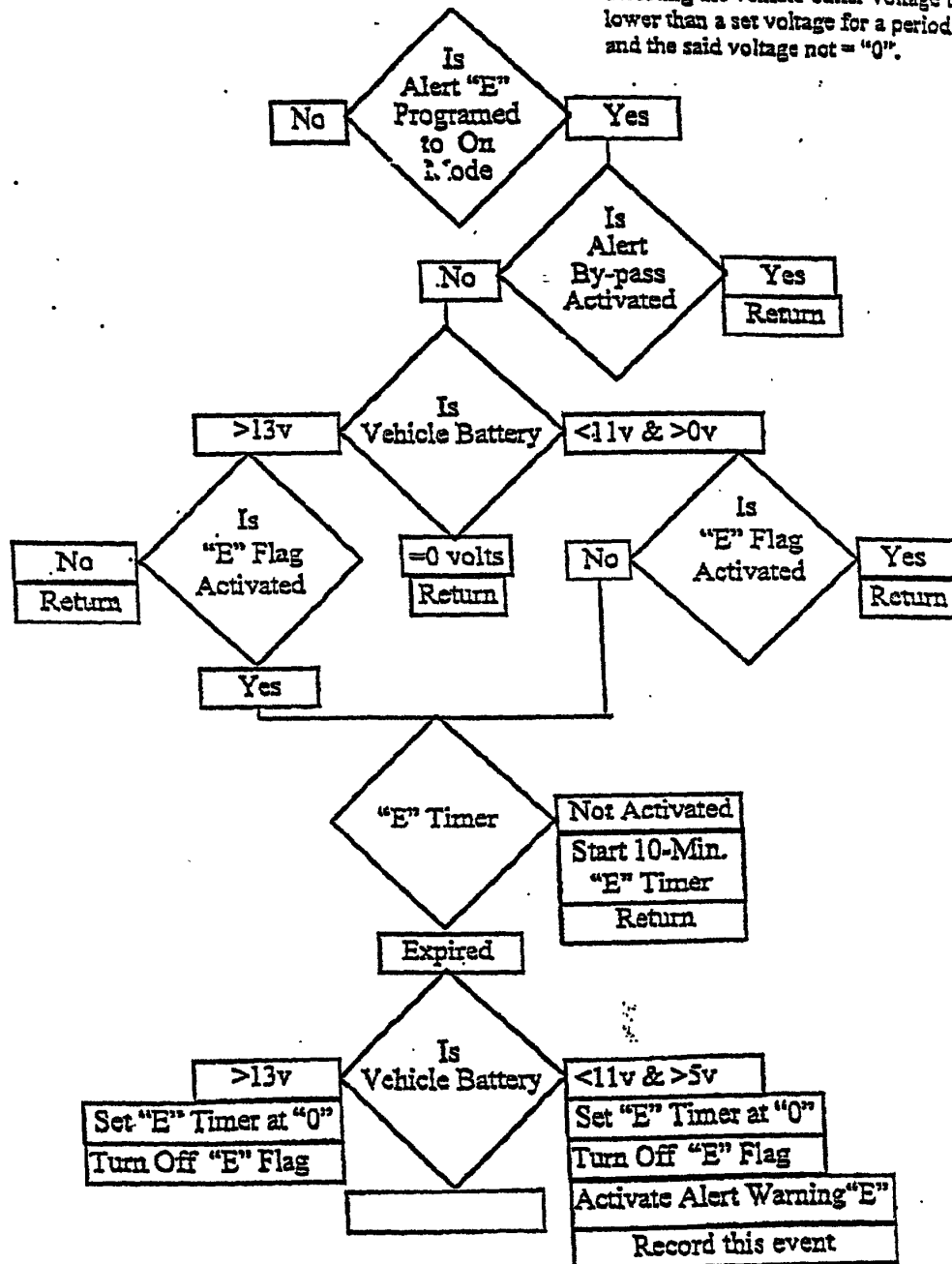
Unauthorized Transmitter Alert is activated when ignition key is turned on and detects a plurality of polarity changes on Gray wire within a set time. This Alert is prevented from activated again until said circuit returns to normal.



Alert "E" = Low Car Battery Power

Your vehicle has a low battery voltage indication. Please take proper action. This alert will not be sent again until your vehicles battery has retained the proper voltage.

Low battery power Alert is activated by detecting the vehicle batter voltage being lower than a set voltage for a period of time and the said voltage not = "0".



Alert "F" = GPS / Cell not active Alert

