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USA: Mercedes-Benz first with Telematics for 2001

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By bcusack



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For an annual fee of \$125 plus airtime, clients begin by customizing personal preferences on their own web page within the Mercedes-Benz USA website at <http://www.mbusa.com>. Then, whenever they push the SVC button beside the color display, their selected stock quotes, news topics, sports and weather can be downloaded and displayed on the screen. Calendar reminders are also possible through the new system.

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New Standard Features for Tele Aid

The Mercedes-Benz Tele Aid system, which provides in-car convenience and emergency services at the touch of a button, is now standard on all 2001-model Mercedes-Benz vehicles. With the April, 1999 debut of Tele Aid in its all-new 2000 S-Class sedans, Mercedes-Benz inaugurated a new era of customer service and communications. The Mercedes-Benz Tele Aid system integrates client response/service from the Mercedes-Benz Client Assistance Center and Roadside Assistance Program with emergency

response/ location-based services from ATX Technologies as well as hardware and software from Motorola.

With free connections and 30 minutes of airtime included for the first year on new vehicles, the standard Tele Aid system incorporates three useful new features for 2001:

— remote diagnostics – if an owner reports a problem, the status of the car’s electronic systems can be accessed remotely via Tele Aid from Mercedes-Benz Roadside Assistance.

— emergency door unlock – if the owner locks the keys in the car, arrangements can be made to unlock the car from the Client Assistance Center, or directly from the MBUSA website.

— anti-theft alarm notification – if the anti-theft alarm is triggered, the system notifies ATX Technologies, who contacts the owner.

How Does Tele Aid Work?

Tele Aid allows Mercedes-Benz drivers to communicate directly with the company from their vehicles, to get information about the vehicle, assistance with its systems or just general information on Mercedes-Benz and its products. The innovative Tele Aid system offers four distinct kinds of services accessible at the touch of a button.

For emergency help, there’s an “SOS” button above the rear-view mirror that immediately establishes voice contact with ATX Technologies, an experienced provider

contracted by Mercedes-Benz. Pressing this button also transmits crucial information about the client to ATX, including the precise location of the vehicle (through GPS satellite tracking), the model of the car and its color (to help emergency services visually locate the car quickly). The ATX response specialist can then notify the nearest appropriate emergency service and help guide them to the car. ATX Technologies can also notify local police, fire or emergency services if voice contact is not established (e.g., the customer is unable to respond) or any third party that the client wants notified.

If a collision deploys any airbag (or the ETR tensioner in the seatbelt), the system automatically establishes contact with ATX Technologies, relaying all pertinent information. The onboard transmitter is crash-secure, and has access to redundant antennae. Tele Aid eliminates the need to know your exact location, dial a phone number, or juggle a handset during an emergency. Moreover, the standard Tele Aid system does not require the customer to purchase a cellular phone or service – it operates on its own cellular system with a crash-secure backup antenna.

Mercedes-Benz Roadside Assistance

Tele Aid includes two other buttons (mounted on the center console for most models, and in the overhead console on M-Class models) for non-emergency use. One marked with the symbol of a wrench puts the customer in contact with the Mercedes-Benz Roadside Assistance. When pressed, the customer profile and mapping/location information is appended to the call and routed directly to a Mercedes-Benz Roadside Assistance technician at the company's Client Assistance Center in Montvale, New Jersey without interruption. In many cases, the Mercedes-Benz

representative can resolve the situation directly with the client. When necessary, a trained technician can be dispatched to the client's location.

“i” For Information

A third button marked with the letter “i” connects the customer with the Mercedes-Benz Client Assistance Center, which can answer customer questions about the car. For example, the driver can request additional information or help in setting and programming any vehicle features.

A fourth benefit of the Tele Aid system is stolen vehicle tracking, which can actually help authorities locate the car once the owner reports it stolen.

Although various telematics capabilities exist in other cars, Mercedes-Benz was the first manufacturer to make emergency calling a standard feature, and the company now has more than 125,000 vehicles equipped with Tele Aid.

ATX Technologies, Inc. is headquartered in Dallas, Texas. ATX provides leading-edge telematics services for mobile applications including automatic collision notification, location-based emergency response and roadside assistance, stolen vehicle tracking, navigation and other location-based information services. The company pioneered in-vehicle and automotive aftermarket applications of telematics beginning in 1995 and in 1999 introduced telematics services on wireless communications devices. For more information, visit www.atxtechnologies.com.

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