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Airbiquity and Continental Sign Telematics Deal

by Lindsay Brooke, Automotive Engineering

Airbiquity and **Continental Automotive Systems** on Monday announced a global software licensing agreement that the companies say will help speed the emergency call (E-call) process from vehicles, potentially saving lives.

The deal gives Continental the world-wide rights to use Airbiquity's aqLink software in its telematics control units. AqLink will enable vehicles equipped with Continental's embedded or Bluetooth-based telematics systems to transmit critical wireless data—such as a vehicle's location during an emergency, airbag-deployment alerts, and remote diagnostics information—using the voice channel of any global wireless network.

The new agreement extends Airbiquity's relationship with Continental, a major telematics and integrated safety systems Tier 1. Airbiquity's in-band modem technology is deployed in more than 4.5 million vehicles equipped with **General Motors'** OnStar telematics system, the hardware of which is supplied by Continental.

Licensing its software to Continental for global use allows Airbiquity "to provide customers a modular product platform with a reliable wireless data transport for telematics services," said Airbiquity President and CEO Kamyar Moinzadeh.

"If E-call is regulated on all vehicles in Europe, they'll take the same platform we're using in the U.S. and deploy it there," said Airbiquity Vice President of Global Business Development David Jumpa.

For Continental, the ability to send E-call data via the voice channel will help further integrate wireless communication systems into its Active-Passive Integration Approach (APIA) vehicle safety system, said Karl-Thomas Neumann, President of Continental Automotive Systems.

APIA "focuses on creating cars that avoid crashes, prevent injuries, and provide immediate assistance if a crash proves unavoidable," said Neumann. He added that the aqLink software is critical in Continental's strategy to transmit real-time data over the voice channel.

The next-generation APIA II, which enters demonstration vehicles later this year, will use telematics to seamlessly link the vehicle to the outside infrastructure, and to other vehicles. Key inputs include GPS, car-to-car, and car-to-infrastructure data.

Previous voice-based data-transmission systems used in vehicle telematics employed dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) signaling, typically called touch-tone, explained David Jumpa, Airbiquity's Vice President of Global Business Development.

He described the aqLink technology being licensed to Continental as "upgrading the way they were transmitting data to use in our modem."

"The value for customers is they can get the operator on the phone for an emergency call a lot quicker than if they were using the DTMF-based technology,' Jumpa said. "Our technology is not prone to any roaming issues that they would have within the wireless network."

Airbiquity and Continental are working jointly on North American and European E-call pilot projects using the aqLink technology. In a recent technology "bake-off," the European Union's E-call Committee (which includes representatives from the wireless carriers and the auto industry) selected in-band modems as the preferred technology, said Jumpa.