

TULSA'S TELETAG: ALL EYES ON BAD DRIVING BEHAVIOR

Jan. 12, 2009

FYI to teenage drivers: Big Brother will soon be watching.

A Tulsa-based company called Teletag LLC is launching a service in which parents will enlist other drivers to monitor their teen drivers' road behavior.

Parents will be able to sign up for a service that includes a bumper sticker asking other drivers to report bad driving to a toll-free number and the ability to receive within-the-hour electronic notification of incidents.

"We're trying to make young, teenage drivers more accountable to the people who have the most influence over them, which is their parents," said Hank Haines, Teletag's founder and chief executive officer. "It's not really Big Brother; it's Big Parent right now."

The bumper sticker is similar to those seen on fleets of 18-wheelers rolling down the highway. It says "Teenage Driver. How's my driving? Call 800-634-SAFE." The bumper sticker will cost \$5.

Parents who want to receive a phone call alert of a reported incident involving their teen driver will pay a monthly fee of \$9.95, or \$7.95 if they sign up through a participating driving school.

Haines and lead developer Patrick Dumontel created a sophisticated database that allows Teletag to receive and process incidence reports from drivers and alert parents.

Calls from concerned drivers are answered by an integrated voice recognition system that prompts callers for the location in which they are driving, the tag number of the car they are reporting and a description of the incident. The call is recorded, transcribed and put into the database, which then generates a phone call to parents.

"If (teen drivers) get reported you will be notified within the hour," Haines said. "You could actually make the call then to alter behavior."

Haines, who also owns Tulsa-based Sequoyah Technologies, conceived the idea for Teletag a couple years ago as his now 17-year-old daughter approached driving age. He read about a similar effort two mothers tried for their teenaged sons that asked other drivers to call their home phone numbers.

Ultimately, Haines created a process that uses a toll free number and anonymous reporting. He is confident the system will reduce teen accidents, injuries and fatalities.

Studies have shown that implementing similar programs on truck fleets reduces accidents by 50 percent in the first year, he said.

“There have been some studies done on accidents,” Haines said. “For every one fatal accident there are 30 minor accidents, and for every minor accident there are 300 near misses. There are a lot of opportunities for people, for parents, to alter behavior before something bad happens.”

Haines eventually plans to market Teletag to fleet owners and insurance companies, which could mine the database for relevant driving information.

Haines began working with Richard Gajan, director of enterprise services for i2E, the not-for-profit corporation that mentors many of Oklahoma’s start-up companies, in September to refine his business plan.

Now it’s ready to go live.

“As I’m trying to roll this out, my daughter turned 16, and within six months she’s in a wreck,” Haines said. “She said a lot of people were honking at her and she didn’t understand why. I suspect that was because she was making a lot of mistakes and I would have had the opportunity to hear about them before hand with Teletag. Would that have made a difference? Maybe.”

About Teletag LLC

Address: 6666 South Sheridan, Suite 210, Tulsa

Web address: www.usteletag.com

No. of employees: 2

Key personnel: Hank Haines, founder and chief executive officer; Patrick Dumontel, lead developer

Year founded: 2008

Key product: System for real time reports of bad driving behavior from teenager using bumper stickers, a toll free number and database that generates an automated call to parents.

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