



Press information

2 September 2001

IRISH CARRIERS INVEST IN COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY FOR CUSTOMERS AND EMPLOYEES

Ireland's largest independent parcels carrier has installed the latest computer-based security systems in each of its new fleet of 70 vehicles –providing greatly enhanced security not only for customers' parcels, but also for drivers travelling throughout the country.

Nightline Air Express Worldwide of Dublin has expanded its successful international parcels handling business with the purchase of 70 new Ford Transit 350s, each with an Aplicom vehicle computer installed and provided with application software by Satcom Technology, Aplicom's system partner in Ireland.

Aplicom's ICA 1004 series computers have been adapted by Satcom so that they are able to carry out three separate, but simultaneous tasks. Real-time tracking uses the GPS (geo-positioning satellite) facility. There are also GSM-based direct link and feedback to and from handheld Symbol technology bar code readers, with the scanning device attached to the dashboard. Finally, the Aplicom computer and Satcom application software offers advanced and discreet security for the driver and cargo.

The compact Aplicom ICA 1004 computer, just 108mm x 113mm x 40mm, has a 16MHz central processor and an optional, factory-installed 12-channel GPS receiver with GPS antenna connector. There are four RS232 serial ports which handle a variety of equipment including the independent alarm system, GSM modem and GPS, and a bar code reader. The integral GSM modem handles all GSM communications, with the service provider being Ireland's largest and most extensive, Eircell.

Reaction from the self-employed, subcontracted drivers of the Nightline fleet has been very positive. The new Satcom/Aplicom system gives them a feeling of improved security – particularly when they are carrying high value loads. In addition, the fast and efficient procedure for collections and deliveries increases their productivity and their personal earnings ability.

There are two separate, but shared elements to the Nightline system. The integrated GPS system in the Aplicom vehicle computer ensures that the vehicle is constantly and automatically tracked. Satcom has configured the software of the Aplicom computer so that when the customer or parcel receiver signs the handheld Symbol Technologies bar code scanner, the customers initials and bar code information along with the GPS information is communicated directly to the Nightline base. The captured confirmation signature is downloaded each evening when the van returns to base.

The security system is linked directly to Satcom's 24-Hour Central Monitoring Centre, a specialist call centre. All information can be shared, but Satcom's 24-Hour Central Monitoring Centre has responsibility for tracking the vehicle and handling any alarm calls – created through several in-built sensors that detect doors opening, ignition changes and direct actions by the driver. Alarm calls are immediately checked – and tested frequently – and Satcom's 24-Hour Central Monitoring Centre is able to contact the driver direct or call out the emergency services through direct links.

Nightline Director and founder John Tuohy believes that improved communications and security based on in-vehicle computers, are keys to the firm's future success.

"We are already the largest independent parcels carrier in Ireland and the investment in security and efficiency means that we can target the valuable low volume/high value market. Our customers need to know where their shipment is, when it will arrive and have confidence in the safety of the load.

“Being independent also means that we can retain the personal touch: if a shipment is going to be delayed we can contact the customer long before it becomes a problem. The new vehicle fleet, plus the Satcom and Aplicom technology solution, means that we can match new technology with traditional service.”

Nightline's expanding business has resulted in a network of depots. There is a new hub and distribution headquarters in Portlaoise, with depots in Cork, Limerick, Galway, Sligo and at the company's headquarters near Dublin airport. Most activity takes place in the evening and overnight and during the day all the depots and the distribution hub are closed. The Dublin headquarters and call centre controls all daytime administration providing significant savings at the same time as ensuring constant and accurate communications with each of the vehicles and drivers.

The in-vehicle computer, designed and manufactured by Aplicom of Finland, is at the heart of the new communications system. Hidden away out of the driver's site it is able to report directly to the Nightline headquarters and Satcom's 24-Hour Central Monitoring Centre, leaving the driver to concentrate on the tasks that earn him and the business the most money.

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.