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Press Release

Becker® Traffic Pro with SVOX Text-to-Speech

Press contact:

Due to the constantly growing need for security and comfort, Harman/Becker Automotive Systems GmbH expects an increasing importance of in-car speech dialog systems. A particularly significant role is attributed to dynamic content such as up-to-date traffic messages. In response to these developments, the company has decided to add SVOX® speech output solutions along with its own speech recognition solutions to selected products such as the Becker® Traffic Pro.

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Karlsbad and Zurich, 3 March, 2006.

This morning, Harman/Becker Automotive Systems GmbH have officially announced that they deploy speech output solutions provided by Zurich-based SVOX for their after-market product Becker® Traffic Pro. In fact, by combining Harman/Becker's proprietary premium speech recognition software with SVOX TTS they aim at bringing the final breakthrough for in-car speech dialog systems.

Previously, navigation and infotainment systems had no support for dynamic speech applications but rather featured pre-recorded speech prompts. As these sound files had been recorded by professional speakers in sound studios, they boasted an excellent speech quality. However, they failed to allow for dynamic announcements such as reading of up-to-date traffic information, personal messages (email, SMS, etc.) or other user-defined information. Such applications that are based on dynamic content require the integration of speech synthesis software.

Speech recognition significantly increases the safety and comfort of in-car navigation and infotainment systems. In particular, complex data input procedures such as dialing a phone number or selecting a destination can be performed while keeping your hands on the steering wheel and eyes on traffic.

Text-to-speech products enhance in-car speech dialog systems. They add an enhanced interaction and ensure highest flexibility for the conversion of dynamic information.

Harman/Becker's navigation system Becker® Traffic Pro was the first after-market product to feature a comprehensive speech dialog system, including a complete destination entry dialog. For this product as well as for selected OEM systems, Harman/Becker will deploy SVOX Smart and SVOX Automotive TTS.

“Automotive speech output solutions based on TTS will become a standard within the next few years” comments Volker Jantzen, CEO of SVOX. “Harman/Becker's innovative activities in the fields of speech dialog systems have been acclaimed for years. We look forward to bolster up this expertise with our own speech output solutions.”

In an attempt to improve road security, German legislation, since 2001, required the usage of hands-free kits when making phone calls while driving. This ruling, along with considerations to increase comfort and safety, compels ever more OEMs and after-market players to equip their head units with speech recognition and speech synthesis software.

Further to this security aspect, improving the usability of the extensive on-board system functions is also a convincing argument for the deployment of speech technology. Experts regard speech technology as an important innovation driver for future infotainment and communication systems. In the future, speech technology will enable new, interactive in-car applications such as reading incoming emails and SMS as well as traffic messages. Most likely, these functions will soon be included in premium segment car lines.

About Harman/Becker Automotive Systems (Becker Division) GmbH

Harman/Becker Automotive Systems GmbH is a subsidiary of Harman International Industries Inc. (Washington). With its technical innovations in the in-car hi-fi, infotainment, in-car navigation, telematics and integrated multi-media systems areas, the Becker brand has achieved worldwide acclaim in the OEM and after-market segment. Furthermore, video-processing, digital TV tuner technology and MOST (Media Oriented Systems Transport) - the standard for in-car multimedia solutions - are more milestones set by Harman/Becker. With the most modern manufacturing processes, the company maintains its position as innovation leader.

The Ulm site within the Harman/Becker Company focuses on themes like acoustics, speech recognition, speech dialog systems, wireless connectivity and integration of speech systems (Starrec® Speech System) in the automotive environment.

Its speech solutions have been launched as pioneer products for the automotive voice control systems market (TEMIC Speech Dialog Systems) in 1996. Since Harman/Becker's solutions have become available as hardware or software in nearly all middle and upper class car lines of the most important European car manufacturers.

About SVOX AG

SVOX AG is the leading provider of embedded speech output solutions for the automotive and mobile device industries. The SVOX Text-to-Speech system, the company's signature product, is part of a full product suite of small, fast and multilingual applications that enable computers and other electronic devices to convert written text into natural-sounding and easily comprehensible speech. SVOX focus on embedded speech allows for specifically optimized solutions, and its software architecture provides customers with a speech engine that can be easily tailored to their technical requirements and market needs.

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