

GM to expand OnStar outside of its own models

January 5 2011, By TOM KRISHER , AP Auto Writer

(AP) -- The OnStar safety system is escaping from the boundaries of General Motors and will be available in the spring to people who own cars and trucks made by other auto companies.

To get the service, though, people have to buy a special [OnStar](#) rearview mirror for \$299 and then pay a monthly fee that starts at \$18.95.

The system, known for its television commercials with operators sending help to people in car crashes, will be sold at [Best Buy](#) and other retailers for use in non-GM vehicles and older GM cars and trucks that don't have the service, the company said Tuesday night at the [Consumer Electronics Show](#) in Las Vegas.

GM says the mirror will work on 99 percent of the 20 top-selling non-GM vehicles from the past 10 years, or about 55 million cars and trucks.

"For years, thousands of drivers have asked us to get OnStar in vehicles that didn't feature it as standard," OnStar President Chris Preuss said in a statement. "It represents a quantum leap forward in our plans to grow our business and provide a strong new revenue base for GM and OnStar from which we can further develop our core offerings in the factory-equipped market."

The crash response system works like this: A sensor inside the mirror can detect front, rear or side impacts. Electronics inside the mirror automatically notify OnStar operators if there's a crash, and the

operators will try to reach the driver. If they get no response or the driver says there's been a crash, the operators will send help to the car based on a [global positioning system](#) that's inside the mirror.

GM also is offering OnStar's one-button emergency help service with the mirror, hands-free calling, navigation and a system that helps police find a car if it's stolen, the statement said. No mobile phone is needed to get the services, the company said.

The mirror, which would replace a car's standard rearview mirror, must be professionally installed for \$75 to \$100, the statement said.

GM has been trying to find new uses for OnStar outside GM vehicles. The company is exploring expansion of the service to boats, motorcycles and even bicycles.

OnStar also said it is working with Verizon Wireless on a system linking car-based video cameras to smart phones. The cameras would monitor the car inside and out and stream video to the owner's smart phone if they see a problem. The system would record video and would notify the owner if someone hit the vehicle or tries to steal it. Details are still being worked out and no date has been set to roll out the system.

OnStar, which began in 1996, has more than six million subscribers in the U.S., Canada and China.

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