

Makers of Tire-Inflation Monitors Offer New Uses of Sensing Technology

By Daniel P. Bearth
Staff Writer

Executives of two manufacturers of tire-inflation monitoring systems said they were expanding the technology's applications as they tried to gain a foothold with sales to truck and trailer manufacturers and fleet operators.

"We're looking beyond tire pressure monitoring systems," Robert Rudman, president of SmarTire Systems in Richmond, British Columbia, said at an investment conference in New York on June 2.

Rudman said SmarTire has developed a universal receiver that can communicate with sensors on a wide range of components on a vehicle, to monitor the engine and brakes, load status, driver credentials and asset tracking.

Having a "wireless gateway" could make it easier for motor carriers to comply with future security regulations that may require "total visibility" of goods in transit, Rudman said.

Meanwhile, officials at Pressure Systems International unveiled a new wheel-end high-temperature warning alert to go with its auto-

mated tire-inflation product.

PSI officials demonstrated the new feature at a June 15 product demonstration in San Antonio.

Fleet customers asked for the alert because excessive heat in wheel ends can lead to catastrophic failure and wheel loss, a company spokesman said.

In March, Frank Sonzala, executive vice president of PSI, reported that sales rose 45% in 2004 and that the tire-inflation system has been installed in more than 1.5 million tires.

"Our penetration in the trailer market has shown the greatest increase," Sonzala said.

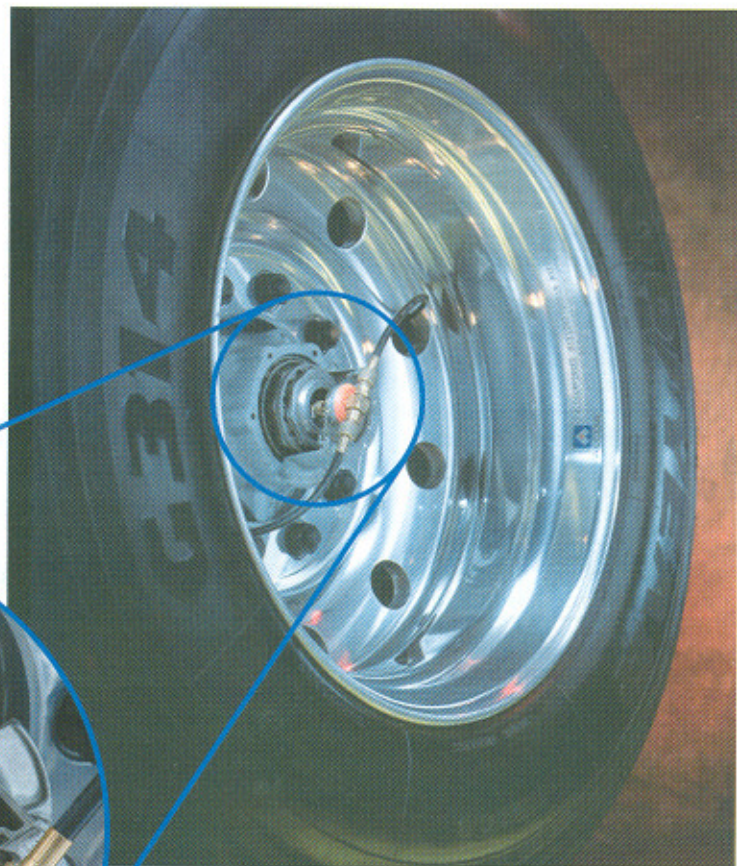
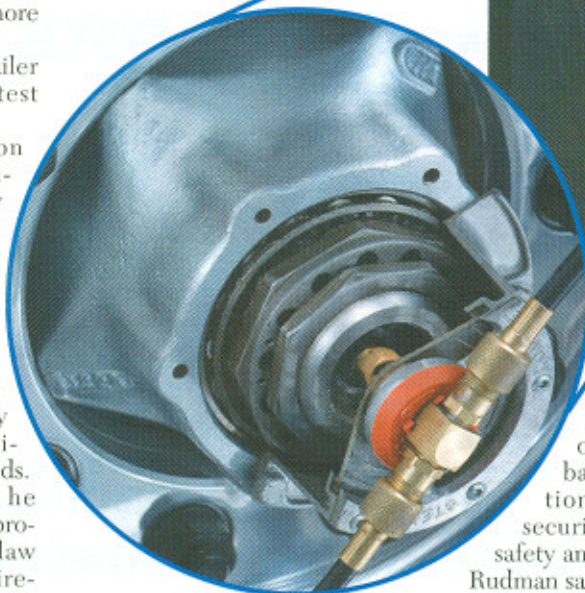
The Meritor Tire Inflation System by PSI is sold exclusively in the United States by ArvinMeritor Inc., Troy, Mich., an \$8 billion manufacturer of axles, brakes and drivetrain component systems for automobiles and trucks.

The PSI system uses the axle tube as a conduit for air pressure and can constantly adjust tire pressures for altitude, climate, weight and speeds.

SmarTire's Rudman said he expected Congress to extend provisions of the Tread Act, a law that requires a phase-in of tire-

pressure monitoring systems on passenger cars, minivans, sport-utility vehicles and light trucks, beginning in 2004, to include all commercial trucks and buses. He did not predict when that might happen.

PSI's tire inflation system is sold exclusively in the United States by ArvinMeritor.



"Additional growth opportunities are rapidly emerging in other transportation-based wireless applications such as homeland security, vehicle and driver safety and asset management," Rudman said.

SmarTire has sold about 5,000 systems to owners of recreational vehicles and has contracts to install its product on motorcycles and some passenger cars in Europe, Rudman said.

Commercial vehicles and buses, however, represent "our primary target market," Rudman said.