SilverLeaf's Newsletter

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Keeping You Informed About Your VMS System.

Contact SilverLeaf at (888) 741-0259.
www.simply-smarter.com

VMS 400™ Brings Color, Video to Dash

Occasionally at SilverLeaf, we even impress ourselves. It isn't easy - this is a group of experienced, savvy engineers that understand electronics intimately. Ordinary electronic tricks aren't going to raise an eyebrow in this crowd.

But the VMS 400 CL™ will catch attention in any crowd. SilverLeaf is just completing the prototyping of what promises to be the most eye-popping product in any dash. Designed to fit the exact dimensions of our popular VMS 320 EL, the 400 CL is a super-bright color VMS with a surprise.

With a press of a button, the VMS converts into a brilliant color video monitor. The full screen video is superior in quality to the common LCD monitors found today, with greater daylight readability due to advanced optics and a super-bright backlight. Plus the 400 CL™ handles two video inputs - say from rear view and side view cameras - with no external circuitry.

Even more impressive are the useful tricks the VMS 400™ can play with those video images. Amazingly, the 400 CL™ can serve as both VMS™ and video monitor simultaneously. The powerful graphics processor can shrink the video input and display it side-by-side with the engine and transmission data. Which means you can drive, watch all your gauges as you normally are accustomed to with any VMS™, and also watch your tow car or scan for cars in the next lane. The video image, though taking only a portion of the screen, remains sharp and detailed. Meanwhile there is no loss of clarity and readability of the vehicle data.

The technical wizardry of the device doesn't end there. The video circuitry handles the flipping of the video signal in its software, which means any camera will display correctly left-to-right. It even allows you to have one rearview camera and one forward-view camera - such as the night-vision cameras becoming popular in trucks..

The clarity of the VMS 400 CL™ comes from its all-digital technology. Today most video products are still stuck in the analog age - even the in-dash GPS systems. This is why "ghosts", color shifts, and other analog artifacts are so evident on these displays. The VMS 400 CL™ processes and displays everything digitally, using the latest in signal processing technology. The payoff is sharp text, perfect color, and great video images at any size.

The VMS 400 CL™ will be unveiled at the RVIA National Trade Show in late November. Production will begin this Winter, with units available for coach builders in April.

Total Coach™ System Adds Tanks, More

SilverLeaf pioneered the "intelligent coach" with its Total Power™ system. The next step in the evolution of this idea is the TM-100 Total Coach™ Sensor Manager and VMS 160 LC™ Multipurpose monitor. Both are now available for coach builders and aftermarket installers.

The TM-100 sensor manager monitors all the coach tanks - Fresh and Waste Water and LP Gas - and takes temperature and voltage readings. But unlike most tank monitors, the TM-100 uses *water pressure* to obtain a reading accurate to just a couple percent. Forget the "1/4", "1/2", "3/4" readouts - a VMS connected to the TM-100 will read "17%" - and mean it! Since the reading is based on hydraulic pressure, it can't be fouled by grease or waste. And even a defective sensor probe is easily replaced - simply unscrew it and screw in another.

The VMS 160 LC™ is the first "VMS™ for the House". With the Total Coach™ system capable of monitoring and controlling the electrical system, tanks, and more, it is essential to have a monitor that mounts easily and looks good in the galley, bedroom, or elsewhere in the coach. The VMS 160 LC™ is designed to be mounted in the face of a cabinet. Its small profile saves space, while its graphic LCD is easy to read. And like all SilverLeaf products, it is fully multiplexing, and can be used in any combination with other VMS™ monitors and accessories.

New for the VMS: AcuTrac Fuel Sensor

At SilverLeaf we keep a list of what we call the “Why-Ain’t-Theres”. These are the problems that we all face as RVers, which surely must have a simple solution but no one seems to have found it. One of these is, “Why ain’t there an accurate fuel gauge?” The float sensors used in every coach today are junk. Full isn’t full, empty isn’t empty, and every reading in between is worse.

Well, we collect these ideas for a reason - to inspire us to go looking for solutions. In this case we were led to an automotive sensor company in Wisconsin that produces a unique product. The AcuTrac is an ultrasonic sensor with no moving parts that replaces the float sensor on the tank. Not only does it drive the fuel gauge on the dash - which suddenly becomes accurate to within a percent or two - it also provides a reading that the VMS can use to provide a true “Miles-to-Empty” gauge. Being solid-state, it is virtually foolproof. Being intelligent, it easily filters out the effects of sloshing and rippling of the fuel.

Currently the AcuTrac is being offered only to RV manufacturers. Plans are proceeding to be able to offer it as an aftermarket item sometime in 2002.

Tip of the Day : Making Each Drop of Diesel Go Farther

At a recent seminar, one VMS owner shared a story about their VMS. It may sound familiar. While driving across the Western US, he passed a fuel stop without realizing that there wouldn’t be another for over a hundred miles. With the fuel gauge reading less than an eighth, he was just a tad nervous.

Of course, he immediately turned his VMS to Rolling MPG and started watching his fuel economy very closely. He summarized for our group, “You’d be surprised how much you can save when you’re motivated!” By slowing down and watching his performance he saved enough to make it to the next fuel stop with hardly a gallon to spare.

The simple way to get the best fuel economy is to follow his lead. Set the VMS to watch Rolling MPG, and do whatever makes it go up, and avoid what makes it go down. It won’t take you long to train yourself into better driving habits.

Of course, knowing a little diesel theory might give you a head start. So you should know what a few of your enemies are when you’re playing this game. By paying attention to more than just the Rolling MPG you may learn your engine even a little better.

Enemy Number One is the Turbocharger. The purpose of the turbocharger is to provide a temporary power boost - and it drinks the fuel like a sailor swilling a beer. If your turbocharger is kicking in on the small rises in the road or on every gust of wind, you’ll see the effect on your MPG.

MPG Enemy Number Two is running at high RPMs. Diesel engines are designed for maximum efficiency at low RPMs - the reason stems from the speed at which the fuel mixes and burns within the cylinder. At higher RPMs the engines are markedly less efficient. This is one reason why running at slower speeds helps the fuel economy so dramatically.

This is also why “taller gears” - that is, a lower rear-end ratio - lead to better fuel economy. With taller gears the coach cruises at a lower RPM. The trade-off comes as a loss of “leverage” - the coach will seem to have less power since it has less leverage against the road. Taller gears make a great cruising coach, but a poor towing and climbing coach.

Another Enemy is excessive downshifting - especially when using the cruise control. If the transmission is shifting into 5th with every gust of wind or rise in the highway, your fuel economy will suffer. Each shift wastes fuel in the shift itself, and it also raises your RPMs to an inefficient level.

All of which explains the rather counter-intuitive fact that MPG Enemy Number Four is the cruise control itself! Granted, cruise controls have improved tremendously with the development of the “soft” cruises in the electronic engines. But no cruise control is as “soft” as a well trained foot. A cruise control can only react to the moment - it can’t see and anticipate the terrain ahead. Your own foot will do a better job, especially if you understand how to play the game.

With the VMS we can do a lot to train our foot and eke the most miles from the least fuel. The rewards are worth the effort: you save money, you earn bragging rights at the campground, and once in a while you may pass the last truck stop for a hundred miles and not regret it.

Web Site Adds Forums

SilverLeaf has made a major addition to its popular web site, *www.simply-smarter.com*. The site has always been a useful source of information, with manuals, brochures, and technical data available for download. Now it’s also interactive, with “bulletin boards” where visitors can post questions and ideas for other visitors and SilverLeaf’s engineers.

Two forums have been created, one for VMSpc™ users and one for owners of in-dash VMS™ monitors. Both boards are prowled by SilverLeaf personnel regularly, and frequently news items appear there before any other public announcements are made. We encourage technical questions on the board - even complaints - since by answering on the board we can help many people simultaneously. We also heartily encourage your stories and suggestions for other VMS™ owners.

Our Catalog of Fine VMS Products

VMS II

VMS 120

VMS 200

VMSII	VMS Monitor w/ 6.5” VFD Display	**Sale!** $995.00
VMS 120 LC	VMS Monitor w/ 2.5” LCD Display	**Sale!** $995.00
VMS 200 EL	VMS Monitor w/ 3.5” EL Display	$1995.00
VMS 320 EL	VMS Monitor w/ 5.6” EL Display	$3995.00
VMS 400 CL	VMS Monitor w/ 6.4” Color LCD Display	$5995.00
VMS 606 CL	VMS Monitor w/ 10.4” Color LCD Display	$19,995.00
RoadWatch	Road Temperature Sensor	$595.00
Weather Station	Temp, Humidity, Barometer, Compass, and more	$595.00
VMSpc	PC Engine Monitor	$395.00

Software Upgrades

VMSII - 20RVxx	Metric, Expanded Trip & Diagnostic Memory	$95.00
VMS 200 - 21RVxx	Metric, Programmable Drive Gauges, Cruise Monitor	$95.00
VMS 320 - 21RVxx	Redesigned Screens, Metric, Programmable Gauges	$95.00
VMSpc - v1.3.3, v2.0b	Available for Downloading at www.simply-smarter.com	Free

$995.00 VMS II Offer Electrifies FMCA Rallies

Nothing goes over better at an RV rally than an old-fashioned bargain. This is as true for SilverLeaf as it is for shoes. For proof, look to the Summer National FMCA Rally in Redmond, Oregon, where we offered for the first time VMS monitors for under a thousand dollars.

The VMS II was first offered three years ago at a price of $1995.00. We slashed the price in half - to just $995.00 - as part of our Summer sales campaign. The effect was electrifying, as dozens of coach owners pounced on the offer. Many owned Safari and Beaver coaches built between ‘96 and ‘99, for which the VMS II was specifically developed. In most of those coaches the VMS II can be installed in the dash in minutes, without even cutting the dash.

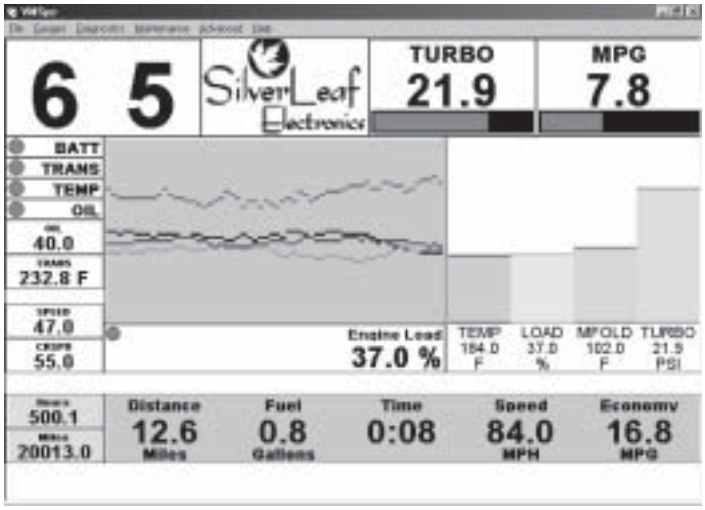
The VMS 120 was also offered at $995.00 - a $200 savings from its original $1195.00 list. The response has been so positive that SilverLeaf is extending the offer on both products indefinitely. But there is a warning for anyone with their eye on the VMS II - the offer can’t last forever. SilverLeaf is no longer manufacturing the VMS II, and the sale is limited to our current inventory. (Don’t worry, VMS II owners. We’ll be servicing and offering accessories and upgrades to the VMS II for years to come. We’re simply concentrating our production efforts on newer products.)

VMS PC 2.0 Beta Available On-Line

Free is always a great price - especially if it is for a truly wonderful product. For current owners of SilverLeaf’s VMSpc™, “free” is also the cost of downloading the latest build of our soon-to-be released VMSpc™ 2.0 software. Like the original version, the new software requires a VMSpc™ Interface Board available from SilverLeaf. The new software lets you monitor your engine and transmission using an ordinary laptop computer, and lets you arrange gauges on your screen in any size and combination.

The idea for the latest version came from VMSpc™ users who wanted to monitor their engine at the same time they ran a GPS program. The new software allows you to arrange gauges on the screen in virtually any combination of location and size. “Scanning” Gauges can be mixed with fixed gauges, bar gauges, and histograms. It even allows you to keep multiple odometers, each with its own history kept on the hard drive.

VMSpc™ users who would like to try to the new software can download it at *www.simply-smarter.com*. Since it is “beta” software, any comments you may have or bugs you might discover will be greatly appreciated by our programming staff. The full VMSpc™ package, including cables and hardware, is $395.00 from SilverLeaf Electronics.



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Martin's Musings:

by Martin Perlot, President

It is amazing how fast things have changed around here. I can remember two years ago most RV builders wouldn't return my phone calls. Working the booth at the FMCA rally meant practically grabbing people by the ear and saying, "Here! Look at this!". SilverLeaf had one major customer, negligible aftermarket sales, and we were losing money. I wasn't worried, of course - I expected to lose money in those first fitful years. But I remember my wife offering to get a night-shift job to help with the bills, and replying, "Oh, honey. We're in *sooo* much deeper than that!"

Today the RV builders know our name - more and more of them are installing our products in their coaches. We sell hundreds of thousands of dollars of product through rallies, Camping World, and dealers. Our booths at the FMCA rallies are busy nonstop. We even are making a little money - which is impressive when you consider that we spend an awesome amount on R&D. Our technology keeps improving as well, and we're adding new products to our lineup incredibly fast.

All of which is wonderful, but it means some things are going to have to change. Our rally presence, for example. As we grow, we're being asked to give seminars at more and more rallies, and we just can't get to all of them. And as we add new accessories to the product line, we need good service centers that can install them. We need to change and adapt as we grow.

That's why over the next six months we plan on recruiting a nationwide group of "Master Dealers", service centers capable of installing any SilverLeaf product. These dealers will have the tools to do software updates and add accessories like the Total Power™ system and Weather Station. We don't plan on putting one on every block - I think we're better off with a dozen excellent service centers than a hundred mediocre ones. In the next newsletter (and on the web site) we'll post the names and numbers for these top-line service facilities.

I'm also looking for a few people who love the SilverLeaf products and can spread the word. I need "evangelists" - RVers who can offer seminars at rallies and be the answer-man wherever they go. Such an evangelist can earn money from selling products, and I'll pay their rally fees wherever they give a seminar. If you happen to enjoy RV rallies and have a bit of the professor in you, let me know and we'll see about getting you started.

I'm not one to spend a lot of time looking back. I much more focused on where we'll be in the future. One thing I know for sure - it'll be different, we'll be bigger, but we'll still be having fun!