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GM, Mercedes-Benz Hit With Patent Suits Over In-Car Wi-Fi

By **Lisa Ryan**

Law360, New York (May 20, 2015, 5:53 PM ET) -- General Motors Co., FCA US LLC and Mercedes-Benz USA LLC were slapped with patent infringement suits in Delaware federal court that allege the automakers ripped off Advanced Media Networks LLC's technology for mobile hot spots by providing WiFi in certain vehicles.

Advanced Media, a company that provides mobile WiFi hot spots on location for Hollywood productions including "Harry Potter" and "Spiderman," claims the automakers have infringed U.S. Patent No. 5,960,074, entitled "Mobile Tele-Computer Network For Motion Picture, Television and TV Advertising Production." GM was hit with its suit on Monday, while FCA's suit was filed Tuesday and the complaint against Mercedes-Benz was entered Wednesday.

"Defendant has and continues to actively promote hot spot functionality to its subscribers knowing that the subscriber's utilization of such hot spot functionality on one or more of the accused devices constitutes infringement of one or more claims of the asserted patent," the complaints said.

According to the suits, Advanced Media was formed in the mid-1990s by inventor Curtis Clark with the express purpose of developing mobile systems that would enable video streaming and other data from remote locations.

The company was issued the patent-in-suit in September 1999, and has licensed the patented technology to multiple mobile wireless network equipment and service providers, the complaint says.

The Chrysler suit claims the automaker offers certain vehicles that contain a device known as Uconnect, which provides a wireless LAN network within the vehicle. It also offers subscription-based communication services, such as wireless broadband, using a microwave communication system, the suits alleges.

Likewise, American Media says Mercedes-Benz sells certain vehicles that also come equipped with a device known as mbrace, which provides a wireless LAN network through the vehicles, and also offers subscription-based services. And according to the company, GM and its subsidiary OnStar LLC sell vehicles equipped with OnStar services, similar to those offered by Chrysler and Mercedes-Benz.

"Each of the defendants, alone, together and/or acting in concert with each other and/or others, has directly infringed and continues to directly infringe one or more claims of the '074 patent by making, having made, importing, using, offering for sale and/or selling the accused instrumentalities," the complaints said.

Representatives for FCA, Mercedes-Benz and the plaintiff declined to comment Wednesday, while a representative for GM didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The patent-in-suit is U.S. Patent Number 5,960,074.

The plaintiff is represented by Gregory B. Williams of Fox Rothschild LLP, and Brian A. Carpenter, Eric W. Buether, Christopher M. Joe, Niky Bukovcan and Mark D. Perantie of Beuther Joe & Carpenter LLC.

Counsel information for the automakers wasn't available Wednesday.

The suits are Advanced Media Networks LLC v. General Motors Company et al., case number 1:15-cv-00403, Advanced Media Networks LLC v. FCA US LLC, case number 1:15-cv-00405, and Advanced Media Networks LLC v. Mercedes-Benz USA LLC, case number 1:15-cv-00410, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware.

--Editing by Mark Lebetkin.

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