

# ROAD TO SAFETY

## Intelligent High Beams Illuminate Safety Concerns

(NAPSA)—Admit it, you've done it too. At one time or another, you've accidentally left your high beams "on," only to blind another driver and find yourself "flashed" as you pass the oncoming vehicle. The experience is enough to make you hesitant to use your high beams the next time you drive at night.

But a new, intelligent high beam assist system recently introduced on several new Chrysler, Jeep, and BMW vehicles is about to change all that. Known as SmartBeam, the system uses a microprocessor and tiny camera-on-a-chip to automatically turn your high beams on and off according to surrounding traffic conditions.

"High beams are one of the most underutilized safety features on vehicles today," said Garth Deur, executive vice president of Gentex Corporation, the company that invented SmartBeam. "Whether it's out of fear of blinding other drivers, annoyance at constantly turning them on and off, or just plain forgetfulness, studies show that drivers use their high beams less than 25 percent of the time during which conditions justify their use. SmartBeam optimizes forward visibility by automating high beam usage, essentially eliminating this age-old safety concern."

During nighttime driving, SmartBeam's camera acquires images directly ahead of the vehicle. If it's dark enough and no other vehicles are present, the system



**A visible improvement for drivers is a system that automatically turns high beams on and off.**

automatically turns on your high beams. When it detects other vehicles' headlamps or taillamps, SmartBeam returns the headlamps to their low-beam state. Gentex believes this can go a long way toward making nighttime driving safer.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, approximately half of all traffic accident fatalities and more than 65 percent of pedestrian fatalities occur at night, despite substantially less traffic volume. Because low beams point downward onto the road, by the time your headlights illuminate a potential road hazard, it will be too late to react. High beams allow you to identify potential road hazards at more than twice the distance as low beams.