

The box that has you covered

■ New system for bespoke insurance

■ It works like a monthly utility bill

■ JAMES FERGUSON

TWO Greater Manchester firms are providing the technology behind a revolutionary new kind of car insurance that will see drivers pay as they go.

Coverbox uses global positioning technology to monitor distance covered and what time a vehicle is used, and the information is used to generate a bespoke insurance bill.

Charges vary according to whether the car is used at peak or off-peak times, and the cover comes from big insurance brands including the Co-op and

Equity Red Star. The gadget is made by Sale-based **Cobra UK**, one of the country's leading automotive security companies, and can also be used to track and recover a vehicle if it is stolen.

They already have 100 fitters across the country, who can visit customers and fit the Coverbox in less than an hour.

The database and admin system are the work of Stockport-based software specialist **CDL**, which receives data from the Coverbox and uses it to generate insurance charges.

CDL employs 260 people and had a £17.5m turnover in 2008, recently opening a new £6m headquarters in King's Reach Road.

Cobra UK's Sandy Dunn said: "We believe both the consumer and the motor industry are now truly ready for pay-as-you-drive insurance.

"Others have tried before, with older-generation technology, but our solution is new-

generation, highly capable and based on integrated security proven by the leading car manufacturers in Europe and Japan."

Customers log on to a website and give an estimate of how many miles they think they will drive.

That generates an estimate of what their bills might be, and when the Coverbox is fitted it provides precise bills based on driving habits.

If drivers have covered fewer miles than expected, they get a refund or credit towards their next insurance bill.

Sandy added: "It will work very much like a monthly utility bill - the key difference, though, is that low-risk drivers who use their cars little and in off-peak periods are not penalised by the actions or accidents suffered by higher-risk drivers at higher-risk times."

Cobra UK has a £45m turnover and employs over 80 people.

