

UK Intros Vehicle Inspection Card

The U.K.'s Ministry of Transport will use smart cards to reduce fraud related to the inspection of vehicles.

June 28, 2002 -- In the U.K. commercial vehicles are taxed on their level of tailpipe emissions. That gives vehicle owners an incentive to, well, cheat. The Ministry of Transport is trying to reduce fraud by implementing one of the largest smart card programs ever undertaken in Europe.

The MOT has awarded a service-level contract to Siemens Business Services, which will provide secure PCs equipped and some 40,000 smart card readers to inspection stations, mainly auto garages, around the United Kingdom. Siemens has, in turn, awarded a £2 million contract to Burall InfoSys, a division of Burall Infocard based in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.

Burall has to supply 10,000 readers per month starting in September, but the actual implementation probably won't begin until mid-2003. Each inspection station will be equipped with a secure PC. Each licensed examiner will be given a smart card containing a unique identification number. Testing equipment will also be tagged with unique identifiers.

Siemens will integrate the technology. When completed, the system will create an audit trail for each of the 30 million inspections done in the U.K. every year. There is still room for fraud, since the technology does not link a specific car to the equipment and examiner. But it will be possible to trace every inspection back to a specific examiner at a specific facility.

Burall will be supplying 13.56 MHz contactless smart cards that have specially designed security features built into it. Burall wrote some custom software so the tags could communicate using high-level protocols for secure access.

Burall is a 180-year-old company that started out providing tags for sacks of grain and potatoes in a farming region of the U.K. It moved into consumer goods packaging and 15 years ago started selling magnetic cards and smart cards for mass transit ticketing and access control. .

The company recently formed the InfoSys division to provide electronic tagging solutions. "In a way, we are going back to the company's core business of tagging of goods in transit," Lawrence Faulkner, director of the InfoSys division.

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