

# Printronix Adds Class 0, 0+ Support

The label printer provider has added support for EPC Class 0 and 0+ RFID tags to its smart label encoder-printers and encoder-printer-applicators.

By Jonathan Collins

Oct. 4, 2004—Bar code and RFID label printer provider Printronix has added support for EPC Class 0 and 0+ RFID tags to its SL5000e series of smart label encoder-printers and its SLPA7000e series of smart label encoder-printer-applicators. The additional functionality can also be added free of charge through a software download available to customers that have already bought the machines since their launch in June (see [Printronix Expands RFID Offerings](#)). Up until now, those printers supported only EPC Class 1 tags. Printronix says it has sold hundreds of the SL5000e encoder-printers since their introduction. Although the majority of sales have been for single machines or just a few units to support pilot RFID programs, some customers have bought a large number of label encoder-printers and encoder-printer-applicators to deploy throughout their supply chain, from overseas manufacturing through U.S. distribution.

Many of those customers see the additional potential to read Class 0 and 0+ tags as increasingly important with their RFID deployments, say Printronix. “The lack of availability of one type of EPC tag over another means that some companies are looking to switch the class of tags they are using, and they want printers that can support that,” says Andy Chapman, chief technology officer and senior vice president of engineering and product marketing, Printronix.

Printronix says it has also found instances where different divisions of the same companies have been trialing different classes of EPC tags and now want to use the same tags throughout their business.

The new firmware upgrades from Printronix enable its SL5000e and SLPA7000e families of machines to support the Rafsec 342 Butterfly 96-bit tag, the Matrics X1020 Class 0 Dual-Dipole and the Matrics X2020 Class 0+ Dual-Dipole Cross-T, says Printronix. The upgrade also adds support for Alien Technology’s Class 1 Squiggle and M-tag 96-bit tags.

In addition, the new firmware delivers speed enhancements for the Printronix SLPA7000e series of smart label encoder-printer-applicators. The company says it doubles the throughput of the machine to around 40 labels per minute by running tag encoding and label application as parallel operations rather than in the serial fashion of its initial releases.

“The bulk of the customer demand is for mandate compliance, where loaded pallets are unloaded, tagged and reloaded. The speed they require is usually around 30 tags a minute,” says Chapman.

Printronix says it will continue to release firmware upgrades as new protocols and antenna designs become available and that the next upgrade release will support the write functions of tags made with Impinj's Zuma Class 0 chip. The company also plans to release a firmware upgrade to the EPC Generation 2 standard, although until work on that standard is finished, Printronix cannot be certain of that possibility. If the units are not firmware upgradeable, they will still be customer upgradeable, according to the company.

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