

EPCglobal Validates Gen 2 Spec

EPCglobal says testing of the Gen 2 specification is complete and validates its feasibility. Committee and board of governor ratification will make it a standard, but questions over royalties linger.

Dec. 3, 2004—[EPCglobal](#), the nonprofit organization charged with commercializing Electronic Product Code (EPC) technology, announced that demonstration testing on the proposed UHF Generation 2 specification is complete and the results validate the feasibility of the proposed standard. The specification now moves to EPCglobal's business and technical committees for ratification and then to its board of governors, which has the power to fully ratify the specification, making it a standard. EPCglobal hopes this will happen by the end of the year.

Sue Hutchinson, director of product management for EPCglobal US, says that she's very pleased with the results of the tests and that EPCglobal members are very hopeful that the spec will become a standard as soon possible, so that hardware manufacturers can begin production of their Gen 2 prototypes.

"They're ready," she says. "All they need is ratification to cock the trigger and get moving [into production]."

Five vendors participated in the final demonstration tests, which were conducted Dec. 2 in a [MET Labs](#) testing facility in Santa Clara, Calif. (MET Labs is EPCglobal's official testing partner). The vendors who participated in the tests were Monsey, NY-based [Applied Wireless Identification](#); Seattle, Wash.-based [Impinj](#); Everett, Wash.-based [Intermec](#), [Philips Semiconductor](#), based in The Netherlands; and Dallas, TX-based [Texas Instruments RFID](#). These vendors' reader and tag prototypes were put through a battery of tests to verify whether the technology functions as it is supposed to in accordance with the UHF Gen 2 specification documents. Hutchinson notes that these vendors make up a core group of vendors that have been developing and testing Gen 2 prototypes since the candidate specification was completed in August.

This final phase of prototype testing began in November after RFID systems provider [Intermec](#) declared a 60-day suspension of its reasonable and nondiscriminatory (RAND) royalty-bearing IP program that the company had announced in mid-August (see [Intermec Spells Out Licensing Plan](#)), for the EPCglobal Generation 2 RFID standard. Everett, Wash.-based Intermec declared the suspension so that prototype testing by other RFID vendors could continue without concern over right infringement of royalty-bearing IP (see [Intermec Suspends Royalties for 60 Days](#)).

EPCglobal, however, has always maintained that its objective is to develop royalty-free standards. It has been reviewing Intermec's RAND claims since mid-August and has yet to declare whether the Gen 2 specification is dependent on the IP that Intermec is claiming under its RAND program. EPCglobal is also still reviewing whether the financial terms for Intermec's royalty structure are acceptable.

"Our objective is still to reduce the royalty load in this standard to as low as possible, preferably to zero, and if not, as close to zero as possible," says Hutchinson. Intermec has not made any change to its RAND program in relation to the Gen 2 spec.

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