

RFID News Roundup

ASK, others, picked for e-passport test; Lab ID releases new portal antenna; ACG reader tops interoperability test; MPI builds large partner network.

Jan. 28, 2005—The following are news announcements made during the week of Jan. 24.

ASK, Others, Picked for E-Passport Test

ASK, a French manufacturer of RFID products, announced that its Smart Paper ID RFID tag has been selected for testing by the U.S. Government Printing Office for use in electronic passports (e-passports), which contain an embedded RFID tag. ASK is currently delivering test samples of Smart Paper ID RFID tags and RFID readers to the GPO for evaluation during the next two months. ASK developed its Smart Paper ID products specifically for use with electronically verifiable documents such as e-passports. In compliance with specifications developed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Smart Paper ID's microchip has 72 kilobytes of memory, sufficient for the storage of biometric data. The Smart Paper ID microchip can be embedded in documents in two ways: The microchip can be integrated with an antenna to form an inlay and then glued to a printed document, or it can be integrated with an antenna that has been printed directly onto paper before the paper is assembled into a full document, such as a passport. In addition to testing ASK's tag, the GPO says its e-passport evaluation program includes RFID tags from three other vendors (Electronic Data Systems, Oberthur Card Systems and On Track Innovations) that it will test during the next two months, as well as four tags it tested last year. On Oct. 8 the GPO had announced it would begin trials of RFID tags from Axalto, Bearing Point, Infineon Technologies and SuperCom (see U.S. Tests E-Passports). The GPO has not released results from last year's tests nor has it explained why it is expanding the evaluation to include four more RFID tags. Once it selects an RFID tag, the Department of State plans to begin issuing electronic passports to U.S. government employees. The Department of State expects to issue the first electronic passports late in the second quarter of 2005, with full deployment at all passport offices in early 2006, according to a GPO statement.

Lab ID Releases New Portal Antenna

Lab ID, a Bologna, Italy-based RFID systems provider, has introduced an RFID portal antenna system. The product, called the Vertical Hands Free Gate System, is composed of two arrays of antennas connected to Lab ID's RACK1000 reader, which operates at 13.56 MHz and reads 13.56 MHz RFID tags compliant with the ISO 15693 standard. The antenna system, which weighs 30 kilograms, is comprised of two 153x70x10-cm gates made with aluminum, acrylic plastic and PVC. The antennas have 16 input/output ports that can be used to plug in devices such as LED lights or buzzers to signal a successful or unsuccessful read of tagged items passing through the portal. The ports can also be used to connect the gate with a photoelectric cell or other sensor so that the antennas will emit RF waves only when a tagged item approaches the gate.

ACG Reader Tops Interoperability Test

ACG Identification Technologies, a German provider of smart cards and readers, announced that its high-frequency (HF) ISO Dual Reader had the most successful reads of RFID inlays in a test conducted by

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). ACG says the reader was designed to perform data capture from RFID-enabled electronic passports. The DFAT conducted the test, which involved 11 RFID reader models from 11 different companies, to determine which readers could read different RFID inlays currently being considered for use in e-passport applications. Each reader was tested for its ability to read 25 different inlay models from six RFID tag makers. The ACG reader successfully read 96 percent of the 25 inlays used in the test, according to the company, and had one of the highest data-transfer speeds.

MPI Makes Builds Large Partner Network

Sebring, Ohio-based MPI Label Systems, an RFID solutions provider specializing in pressure-sensitive flexographic labels, announced a partnership network with a range of firms in order to provide MPI customers access to an increased range of RFID products. Through the partnership, UPM Rafsec, Texas Instruments, KSW Microtec, Alien Technology and Avery Dennison will provide HF 13.56 MHz and UHF 915 MHz EPC Class 0, Class 0+ and Class 1 inlays for smart label conversion; Alien Technology, Northern Apex, Escort Memory Systems and SAMSys will provide HF and UHF readers and antennas for system integration; Sato America and Zebra Technologies will provide RFID-enabled thermal-transfer printing equipment; Tharo Systems and Teklynx will provide label-design software and Label-Aire and Van Meter Industrial will provide label applicators and product-handling equipment.

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