

DOD Awards Contracts for EPC Tags

Five companies have won contracts to supply the U.S. Department of Defense with EPC Class 1 passive UHF tags.

By Jonathan Collins

Mar. 22, 2005—Five RFID tag suppliers have won the first round of contracts from the U.S. Department of Defense as the DOD looks to start using passive UHF RFID systems.

RFID systems provider Intermec Technologies, RFID product manufacturers Alien Technology and Lowry Computer Products, IT and professional services company CDO Technologies and the Avery Dennison's Security Printing Division will all deliver EPC Class 1 passive UHF tags operating in the 860 MHz to 960 MHz range, with 96-bits of user-programmable memory.

The contracts were awarded as Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs), which indicate the contract framework and pricing for the items to be purchased so that all of the DOD branches can use them to order tags knowing the tags will operate within the DOD's common, integrated structure for logistics identification, tracking, locating, and monitoring of commodities and assets.

The BPAs were awarded by the Office of the Joint- Technology, which is responsible for supplying, customizing and installing automatic-identification technology, which includes RFID, to the DOD, the U.S. Coast Guard and federal agencies. Five additional groups of RFID contracts are expected to be announced this year. They will cover the purchases of fixed, portable and handheld RFID readers, RFID software and RFID integration services.

Details of the value and quantity of tags covered by the first group of BPAs were not made available, but the contracts stipulate delivery dates, depending on the tag and quantity specified in the agreements, that are either 15 or 30 days from the time the DOD places an order. The BPAs run from Mar. 3, 2005, to June 30, 2007.

The DOD will buy eight different tag models from Alien, including two models specially designed for use with Zebra printers and two specifically for Printronix printers. Intermec will supply five models of its tags, with two specifically designed for use on metallic and liquid shipments and the others for general use. Of the four models of tags Lowry will supply, two will be ruggedized and two will be for general use. Avery Dennison will provide three tag designs: one intended for use on metallic and liquid shipments, and two for general use. The tags set for delivery from CDO will comprise the same three models that Avery Dennison is providing but with additional protection for extended outdoor use. The contracts are also believed to include newer designs that will be developed and become available during the life of the contract.

The Defense Department will use the tags to identify outbound shipments dispatched from DOD depots and warehouses. The DOD has already tested EPC Class 1 passive UHF technology at the Norfolk Ocean Terminal, in Norfolk, Va., which is operated by the Naval Supply Systems Command and provides a waterfront logistics support. At a freight consolidation station within the Norfolk facility, the DOD is

consolidating shipments of materiel bound for various overseas locations (see [The DOD Begins RFID Rollout](#)).

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