

At next week's RFID Journal LIVE! conference, a number of vendors will demonstrate tags that comply with EPCglobal's second-generation standard for passive UHF tags and readers.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Apr. 8, 2005—At next week's annual [RFID Journal LIVE!](#) conference in Chicago, more than 100 sponsors are offering information on and demonstrations of new hardware and software products. Expected to garner significant interest are tags and readers developed around EPCglobal's Gen 2 standard for passive UHF tags.

Seattle-based fabless semiconductor company [Impinj](#), which announced this week that its GrandPrix Gen 2 product platform (the Monza tag and the Speedway reader) will be available to customers by the end of the second quarter, plans to demonstrate its Gen 2 tags and readers at the conference. Impinj says it has already produced tens of thousands of its new Monza chip for RFID inlays (see [Impinj Announces Gen 2 Tags, Reader](#)) and that tag manufacturers Avery Dennison, IER, KSW Microtec, Precisia, RSI and UPM Rafsec have produced samples of Gen 2 tags using the Monza chip. [Avery Dennison](#) and [RSI](#) will be demonstrating Gen 2 tags made with the Monza chip. Precisia, and UPM Rafsec are also exhibiting at the conference next week and might be providing demonstrations of sample Gen 2 tags.

Impinj says tests have shown tags made with the Monza chips can be read by Gen 2-upgraded readers developed by AWID, Intermec, SAMSys and ThingMagic. New York-based reader manufacturer [AWID](#) will be demonstrating Gen 2 readers interrogating Gen 2 tags made with the Monza chip. The company says Gen 2 firmware upgrades of AWID readers (which are used in Printronix smart label printer-encoders as well as Scion handheld readers) will be available from AWID and its partners beginning in July.

Everett, Wash.-based RFID systems provider [Intermec](#) will demonstrate its Gen 2 reader, the IF5, working with EPC Gen 1 and Gen 2 tags. Intermec has also developed a Gen 2 Intellitag smart label using the Philips U-Code G2 chip. Intermec is also partnering with Impinj to develop Gen 2 tags using the Impinj Monza chip tag. Neither the IF5 reader nor the Intellitag Gen 2 tag are available for purchase; Intermec says, but both should be available in production quantities by Q3, with beta versions available for testing during Q2.

Cambridge, Mass.-based reader developer [ThingMagic](#) says four of its partner companies—Acsis, ADT Sensormatic/Tyco, RFID Global Solutions and Venture Research—will be demonstrating the ThingMagic Mercury4 reader with Gen 2 tags being provided by those partners. ThingMagic says the Gen 2 firmware upgrade for the Mercury4 reader will be available soon, through ThingMagic partners. Pricing has not been determined. The Intermec IF5, ThingMagic Mercury 4 and Impinj Speedway Gen 2 readers can all operate in dense-reader mode, according to the companies. (For more on dense-reader mode and other Gen 2 specifications, see [Part 1: Understanding the EPC Gen2 Protocol](#).)

Toronto-based RFID systems provider [SAMSys](#) will demonstrate its MP9320 v2.8 reader with Gen 2 tags made with chips from Impinj, Philips and Texas Instruments. Capable of reading Gen 2 tags as well as Intermec's Intellitag and tags compliant with Gen 1, ISO 18000-6, Philips U-Code 1.10 or EM 4222 protocols, the MP9320 v2.8 will be available for delivery in May and has a suggested list price of \$2,999. Current users of SAMSys readers can get a firmware Gen 2 upgrade from SAMSys, in accordance to its "Tru Blue Gen 2" policy (see [SAMSys Announces Reader Upgrade Policy](#)).

In addition, a number of companies at the conference will be introducing middleware software upgrades aimed at improving integration with enterprise legacy systems. Some innovative applications of RFID technology will also be on display. San Jose, Calif.,-based [WJ Communications](#) will be giving a technology demonstration, aimed at VARs and system integrators, showing how RFID readers in PC card form factors could be integrated into 802.11 Wi-Fi access points to develop a low-cost OEM reader network.

The conference begins Sunday, Apr. 10, with a number of preconference seminars that focus on RFID in healthcare, aviation and the packaging industry. During a preconference seminar designed for investors interested in RFID, Ethernet pioneer Bob Metcalfe will moderate a session entitled "RFID in 2010," which will look at the RFID's expected progress during the coming five years.

Tom Ridge, former secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, will kick off the executive conference with his keynote address, "The Importance of Technology in Protecting the Homeland." Chicago-based consulting firm [Accenture](#) is RFID Journal LIVE!'s cornerstone sponsor. Following Ridge's keynote, Accenture partner Lysle Ginsburg will open an Accenture-sponsored reception.

Executives from Wal-Mart, Kimberly-Clark and Tesco will address attendees on the present state of RFID deployments in the retail supply chain. Alan Estevez, assistant deputy undersecretary of defense, will provide updates on the U.S. Department of Defense's RFID implementation, and EPCglobal US president Mike Meranda will bring attendees up to date on developments pertaining to EPC hardware and software standardization.

The futurist Paul Saffo, who directs research at the Institute for the Future, will close the conference on Tuesday, Apr. 12, by examining RFID as part of a larger trend in which computers are used to sense, manage and respond to events.