

Three companies received Blanket Purchase Awards covering handheld RFID interrogators, but all will sell handhels from the same vendor, Psion Teklogix.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Sept. 2, 2005—The [U.S. Department of Defense's Information Technology, E-Commerce and Commercial Contracting Center \(ITEC4\)](#) has granted three Blanket Purchase Awards (BPAs) allowing government agencies to contract specific vendors for the purchase of multiprotocol EPC handheld readers, or interrogators. The ITEC4 supports the [Product Manager Joint-Automatic Identification Technology \(PM J-AIT\)](#), which is responsible for supplying, customizing and installing RFID and other automatic-identification technology to the DOD, the [U.S. Coast Guard](#) and several federal agencies.

The vendors granted the BPAs are [CDO Technologies](#), [SYS-TEC](#) and [WFI Government Services](#). All three BPAs will expire on June 30, 2007. According to the BPAs, each company will be able to sell [Psion Teklogix's](#) 7535NI handheld reader, along with such accessories and components as holsters, batteries, docking stations and power cords. The 7535NI reads passive UHF EPC Class 0 and 1 tags, as well as 1-D and 2-D bar codes.

According to Cyndi Meszaros, contract administrator for SYS-TEC, an RFID handheld interrogator manufactured by [Symbol Technologies](#) was also listed on the SYS-TEC application for the BPA. However, Symbol's reader was not listed on the final award because it was not certified under a nonincendive electrical equipment rating the DOD requires for any equipment that might be used in storage areas for hazardous equipment, such as explosives. A spokesperson from CDO Technologies says its original application included a handheld from [Intermec](#) and Symbol, but that those devices were removed from the final BPA for the same reason. A spokesperson for WFI Government Services says its original application also listed a handheld from a secondary manufacturer. Though he would not name the company, he did say that if the device achieves certification for nonincendive electrical equipment on the handheld, WFI will resubmit its application to the DOD with that unnamed manufacturer's interrogator included.

The 7535NI is certified by the [American National Standards Institute \(ANSI\)](#) as nonincendive electrical equipment. Such equipment has been determined to be incapable, under normal operating circumstances, of igniting a flammable airborne gas or dust due to arcing or thermal means. Susan King, Psion Teklogix's regional vice president for government solutions, says her firm sells a number of goods to the DOD, and that it had submitted its 7535N1 for nonincendive certification in part because it anticipated sales of the handheld to government agencies that would require the rating.

This is the fifth and final group of BPAs for passive RFID technology that the DOD planned to announce. The other four BPAs addressed the purchase of UHF passive EPC Class 0 and Class 1 tags (see [DOD Awards Contracts for EPC Tags](#)); fixed UHF RFID readers (see [DOD Awards Reader Purchase Agreements](#)); RFID technical engineering services (see [DOD Awards 17 BPAs for RFID Services](#)); and passive EPC Class 1 RFID label printer-encoders (see [DOD Grants BPAs for](#)

[Printer-Encoders](#)).

PM J-AIT says it is planning to schedule a meeting of the DOD Service Point of Contact/Central Order Processing Offices (POC/COPOs) in October, in Springfield, Va., to disseminate information and discuss the order processing for all five BPAs. The U.S. Army's [CECOM Acquisition Center](#) has posted information on the BPAs on its [Awarded Contracts](#) Web page.