

EPCglobal Certifies Gen 2 Hardware

The organization announced the initial recipients of its Gen 2 hardware conformance certifications, and the accreditation of four performance test centers.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Sept, 15, 2005—During its conference in Atlanta this week, EPCglobal announced the initial recipients of its Gen 2 hardware conformance certifications, which verify that products perform in conformance to all of the required functions described in the EPCglobal UHF Gen 2 standard protocol. Seven companies, listed in the chart below, received certification for a total of 10 pieces of Gen 2 hardware, including one Gen 2 chip and six interrogators, or readers.

To denote that a specific product has been certified, RFID hardware vendors can use a special emblem combining a check mark, the EPCglobal logo and a unique 18-digit code referring to the specific tests that product passed. (Conformance tests for chips, for instance, are different than for readers.)

"The vendors put a lot of work into getting ready for these tests, and they went very well," says Sue Hutchinson, director of product management for EPCglobal US. She notes that many more Gen 2 products are lined up for certification testing, and EPCglobal, along with its Baltimore-based testing partner, MET Labs, will continue to run its Gen 2 hardware certification tests. "We might be announcing that five to 10 more products have received the Gen 2 conformance certification before the end of the year," says Hutchinson.

EPCglobal developed its hardware certification program to provide a standardized, unbiased and authoritative means of verifying that RFID hardware conforms with EPCglobal standards. "Vendors' participation in the certification program helps ensure end users that the Gen 2 products they buy will conform to the standard, and that's very important," says Mike Meranda, president of EPCglobal US.

<i>Initial Recipients of EPCglobal's Gen 2 Hardware Conformance Certifications</i>	
<i>COMPANY</i>	<i>PRODUCT(S)</i>
Alien Technology	• ALR-9800 Reader
Applied Wireless Identifications (AWID)	• MPR-1510 Reader Module • MPR-3014 Reader
Impinj	• Monza RFID Chip • Speedway RFID Dense-Mode Reader 1.1
Intermec Technologies	• Reader Module IM5 for Europe (865 MHz) • Reader Module IM5 for North America (915 MHz)

MaxID Group	• RM100 RFID Reader Module
Symbol Technologies	• XR-400 US RFID Reader
ThingMagic	• Mercury4 Reader

These certifications do not signify that all Gen 2 tags using EPCglobal Gen 2 conformance-certified chips will interoperate with every Gen 2 conformance-certified reader, Hutchinson explains. Therefore, to determine how well tags perform in this regard, EPCglobal will next launch the second phase of its certification testing: interoperability. All entrants for these tests will first need to earn the conformance certification.

Impinj's Monza chip is currently available, and the company is shipping it to a number of tag manufacturers (see Impinj to Ship 50M Gen 2 Chips in 2005). Most of the certified interrogators and reader modules (compact readers that can be embedded into fixed or handheld units, as well as printer-encoders) are also available. Users running versions of these products that are not Gen 2-ready can upload a Gen 2 firmware upgrade from their hardware provider.

Intermec's IM5 reader module is embedded in Intermec's IF5, IF4 and IV7 readers, as well as its PM4i printer-encoder.

The MaxID Group, based in London, says its RM100 reader module is available now. The company is embedding the module in mobile and fixed readers. MaxID distributes RFID and other Auto ID products designed and developed by SyGade.

During the conference, EPCglobal also introduced the EPCglobal Performance Test Center Accreditation Program, which it developed to assess and evaluate facilities offering RFID testing services in real-world environments. Adopters of RFID technology will be able to use these centers to evaluate the performance of various tags on pallets, cases and individual consumer or commercial products. They also might evaluate the effectiveness of various readers and other RFID hardware, such as printer-encoders and antennas.

Four centers were awarded the accreditation during the conference: The Pacific RFID Performance Solutions Center in Hsinchu, Taiwan; Kimberly-Clark's Auto-ID Sensing Technologies Performance Test Center in Neenah, Wisc.; Metro Group / GS1 Germany RFID Test Center in Neuss, Germany; and the RFID Research Center, a unit of the Information Technology Research Institute, Sam M. Walton College of Business, University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Ark.

EPCglobal says the establishment of the Performance Test Center Accreditation Program will assure companies that the centers' services meet a standardized set of performance-test profiles to simulate real-world conditions.

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