

RFID News Roundup

Intermec's new rugged passive tag for assets; Savi announces new sensor tags; Sybase scales up device support in upgraded middleware; NCR offering bundle, reselling ThingMagic; Psion Teklogix announces handheld for deep freeze; ODIN releases Gen 2 interrogator report; Arby's to accept RFID payment at 1,000 locations.

Intermec's New Rugged Passive Tag for Assets

Intermec has introduced a reusable, ruggedized RFID tag designed for tracking goods or reusable containers—even those exposed to extreme temperatures or other conditions that can threaten a tag's functionality. The RFID Large Rigid (LR) tag has an antenna enabling it to be read whether attached—via screw mounts or adhesive tape—to plastic, wood or metal assets. This tag is designed for use under both North American (FCC) and European (ETSI) radio frequency usage regulations. This allows a user to encode it in one region and read it in another. The Intermec RFID LR tag measures 3.2 by 14.27 centimeters (1.26 by 6.1 inches). Its rugged impact-resistant plastic housing is said to survive hazardous chemical exposure and withstand temperatures from -40 to 250 Fahrenheit (-40 to 121 Celsius). The tag is available with either a UHF EPC Gen 2 Class 1 inlay or an ISO 18000-6B inlay. The Gen 2 version can hold 96 bits of memory, while the ISO 18000-6B model accommodates 2024 bits. Both can be encoded and reencoded thousands of times. The tags are now available, though pricing has not yet been released.

Savi Announces New Sensor Tags

Savi Technology, a provider of active RFID tracking and security applications, released two new active sensor tags on Tuesday—the ST-673 and the ST-674—at the RFID Journal LIVE! conference in Las Vegas. The tags include temperature and humidity sensors, and are designed to monitor the environments to which goods are exposed during transit or storage. They can be used to track military and commercial shipments, including aircraft engines, ammunition, medical supplies, food and other perishables. When commissioning the tags, users can set acceptable temperature and humidity ranges, tailored to the characteristics of the particular goods being monitored. The ST-673 is a data-rich, active RFID tag with a metallic mounting bracket for metal containers, engine frames and other metal assets. It enables shippers, carriers and logistics service providers to monitor in real-time the location, temperature and humidity of perishables sensitive to spoilage. They can also track aircraft engines and other assets susceptible to corrosion or rust as they move through the supply chain. The ST-674 is designed for insertion into plastic, wood or other nonmetallic containers, or for attachment to pallets during transportation, or on warehouse racks, shelves or other fixtures during storage. The ST-673 comes with a bracket for mounting the tag onto the outside of metal containers, engine frames and other metal assets through a small portal enabling the tag's sensor to take accurate temperature or humidity readings of the inside of the container. The sensor tags are now available, though pricing information is not yet available.

Sybase Scales Up Device Support in Its Middleware

Sybase subsidiary iAnywhere has released the latest version of its RFID middleware platform, RFID Anywhere 2.1. This version includes upgraded support for the Alien 9800, AWID 3014, Symbol XR400/XR480, ThingMagic Mercury and Intermec IF5 interrogators, as well as for handheld devices. It currently supports the Psion Teklogix 7535, Intermec 751 and Symbol Technologies MC9000-G RFID-enabled handheld computers. The new version of the middleware includes tools developers can use to access all of an RFID interrogator's functionality and features. It also provides simplified general-purpose

input/output (GPIO) control, and a reader-synchronization tool for operating multiple Gen 2 interrogators in dense-reader mode. Version 2.1 of RFID Anywhere is available immediately; pricing information has yet to be released.

NCR Offering Bundle, Reselling ThingMagic

NCR launched its first RFID starter bundle, dubbed NCR TagWorks. The package includes the installation and setup of a slap-and-ship implementation for a single SKU. Priced at \$35,000, TagWorks is aimed at the next 100 suppliers set to meet Wal-Mart's RFID mandates at the end of this year. The package comprises a single roll of 800 4-by-6-inch UHF RFID labels from NCR's Systemedia division, a printer-encoder from either Zebra or Printronix, a Dell PC server, NCR's own ID Velocity software, training, support and a fixed-position ThingMagic Mercury4 reader. NCR also announced it will resell ThingMagic readers separately from the TagWorks package. TagWorks is presently available only in the United States, but NCR says versions for Europe and Asia are planned for later this year.

Psion Teklogix Announces Handheld for Deep Freeze

Psion Teklogix, a provider of mobile data collection solutions, says it has added its RD7950 UHF interrogator to its 7530 handheld computer and bar-code scanner. Designed for use in rugged environments and in extreme temperatures, the RFID-enabled 7530 reads EPC UHF Gen 2 and Gen 1 Class 1, 0+ and 0 tags; as well as ISO 18000-6b and EM Micro tags. The device can operate at temperatures between 32 degrees and 122 degrees Fahrenheit (zero to 50 degrees Celsius). Its components are designed to resist condensation damage, optimizing it for use in freezer environments where the device is likely to be brought into and out of cold temperatures regularly. The 7530 computer has a 32-bit microprocessor, 4 megabytes of flash memory and 8 MB of RAM. It will be available in May 2006 through Psion Teklogix' sales offices, distributors and value-added resellers across North America. A European version will be offered in July. The device costs \$2,995.

ODIN Releases Gen 2 Interrogator Report

RFID systems integrator ODIN Technologies has released the Gen 2 RFID Reader Benchmark report, for which it analyzed seven UHF EPC Gen 2 RFID interrogators (readers). The report is designed to provide end users with insights into the various devices' performance levels and capabilities, based on testing ODIN performed in its lab. The report also offers criteria end users can use to evaluate their purchase options. The tests involved different scenarios, such as reading tagged goods moving through dock doors, along conveyors and at stretch-wrappers. The performance criteria included reading distance, power output, readability, performance degradation through interference and the interrogators' ability to operate in an environment shared by many other operating readers. The interrogators utilized in the benchmark study were Alien Technology's ALR 9800, Impinj's Speedway, Intermec's IF5, Omron's V740, Sirit's MP 9320 (previously from SAMSys), Symbol's XR400 and ThingMagic's Mercury4 interrogator. All of these readers are certified by EPCglobal for conformance to the EPC Gen 2 air-interface standard. The report is available on ODIN's Web site for \$1,500.

Arby's to Accept RFID Payment at 1000 Locations

The Arby's Restaurant Group quick-service restaurant chain, with more than 3,500 locations, plans to accept MasterCard PayPass, American Express ExpressPay and Visa Contactless RFID payment cards at approximately 1,000 of its Arby's restaurants by the third quarter of 2006. The company is offering the payment option to provide customers with more convenient, faster service. Patrons with credit or debit cards containing the PayPass RFID inlay will be able to pay for goods by presenting their cards to RFID-enabled payment terminals at registers and drive-throughs. Customers will not be required to sign a receipt for purchases under \$25.