

RFID News Roundup

AeroScout partnering on tracking system for mines; Innovision announces NFC platform; RFID4U, ODIN offering training in D.C. area; Ipico tags cross finish line in increasing numbers; RFID-enabled mouse and pad for European users; Navigational Sciences licenses DOE's RFID technology; SkyTek HF/UHF development kit; Royal Bank of Scotland testing RFID payment cards.

June 23, 2006—The following are news announcements made during the week of June 19.

AeroScout Partnering on Tracking System for Mines

AeroScout, a provider of Wi-Fi-based RFID asset-tracking solutions, and Mine Site Technologies (MST), a company specializing in mining communication systems, have partnered to develop a location-tracking and communications solution for underground mines. The companies say the system uses active Wi-Fi-based RFID tags to enhance the safety and health of miners without adding unnecessary networking equipment to the mines. An AeroScout battery-powered tag is embedded into an MST Integrated Communications Cap Lamp (ICCL), worn by a miner. The lamp is tracked in real-time, through MST's ImPact Digital communications hub, enabling mine operators to track the miner's position as he moves throughout the underground mine. The location can be continually logged and viewed on a map in real time from a standard Web browser. According to the company, the combined solution is now available. For pricing information, contact MST directly.

Innovision Announces NFC Platform

Innovision Research & Technology manufactures an NFC-compliant passive tag for use in smart posters, information kiosks and other consumer-facing NFC applications. The company says it has developed Topaz, an NFC chipset and NFC software platform designed for use in NFC phones and other NFC-enabled consumer electronics. The platform is designed to allow NFC applications such as mobile payments and ticketing transactions access to digital content via NFC-enabled mobile devices. Built for applications requiring a small amount of memory (1 to 2 kilobytes), such as smart poster or one-touch set-up applications, Topaz can also accommodate RFID-enabled payments using the ISO 14443A air interface protocol.

RFID4U, ODIN Offering Training in D.C. Area

Sunnyvale, Calif.-based RFID4U, a company that offers RFID technology training courses, is partnering with RFID systems integrator ODIN Technologies to bring RFID4U's RFID+ CompTIA certification training to the Washington, D.C., area. RFID4U is holding the training session at ODIN'S Dulles, Va., headquarters to serve the growing number of companies deploying RFID technology in the region. The firm's RFID+ course includes basic RFID training and system deployment instruction, as well as practice tests for RFID+, the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA)'s industry-standard RFID certification exam. ODIN's Easy Reader software and interrogator configuration tool will be used to demonstrate how multiple EPC Gen 2 readers may be deployed within a single facility. The first RFID+ training class will be held August 22-25 and costs \$4550. To register, or for more information, visit RFID4U's Web site.

Ipico Tags Cross Finish Line in Increasing Numbers

Ipico, a provider of RFID solutions for tracking assets and peoples, as well as for transportation/logistics and supply chain applications, says its Sports Timekeeping solution has been successfully used at many recent

sporting events around the world. Last April, at the Absa Cape Epic mountain biking event in South Africa, Ipico's dual-frequency tags identified and tracked more than 1,000 racers, their bike bags and their mountain bikes—as well as the more than 420 staff members supporting the 921-kilometer race—using readers mounted throughout the course. The tags can reportedly be read from as far away as 2 meters, and as quickly as 20 milliseconds. Ipico's tags and readers were also used for cycling and motorcycling timing at the recent [Commonwealth Games](#) cycling trials in Melbourne, Australia, and at a running race in Colorado—the [Steamboat Classic](#) on June 17—where registration and timing services provider [Mercury Sports Group](#) used RFID data to provide the media with real-time information. "The sport timekeeping market is one of the key vertical markets for Ipico over the short and medium term," says Luther Erasmus, the company's COO.

RFID-enabled Mouse and Pad for European Users

[Macally Peripherals](#), an Irwindale, Calif., manufacturer of computer peripherals, has entered into a partnership it hopes will see its RFID-enabled mouse pad and PC mouse sold in Europe. [Michael Letterer](#) will help Macally market the mouse and mouse pad to European businesses, resellers and consumers. Both products have built-in RFID interrogators operating at 13.56 MHz, able to read tags compatible with ISO 14443A, [Philips](#) Mifare, [Sony](#) Felica and NFC standards. The peripherals provide a way for people to use RFID cards to identify themselves and log on a PC. According to Macally, adding RFID to the computer log-on process provides an authentication check during log-on, eliminating the need to enter names and passwords to access secure Web sites. This process can also help prevent spyware from stealing personal information during the log-on process.

Navigational Sciences Licenses DOE's RFID Technology

[Navigational Sciences](#), an asset-tracking service provider based in Charleston, S.C., has signed a license agreement with the [U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory](#) (ORNL). The agreement includes nine patents related to several advanced communications methods developed at the lab, including one called hybrid spread spectrum (HSS). According to Navigational Science's vice president of product development, Scott Blair, HSS combines three radio frequency transmission techniques—frequency hopping, time sequencing and direct-sequence spread spectrum—to create a waveform inherently resistant to multipath interference and RF null spots. The company is using HSS to create a 2.45 GHz active RFID tracking system for track and trace applications in the transportation and logistic industry, specifically for tracking shipping containers and other mobile assets. The technology will be marketed under the Wave Additive Radio Processing (WARP) brand. Navigational Sciences says tags and readers using the licensed technology will be available during the first quarter of 2007. The firm's current WARP RFID tracking systems use technology developed in-house at Navigational Sciences, but are less robust and secure than the technology being licensed by ORNL.

SkyeTek HF/UHF Development Kit

[SkyeTek](#), a Boulder, Colo., designer of RFID modules, has announced the release of its Item-Level Developer Kit. This kit enables developers of RFID solutions to create either high-frequency (HF) or ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) products that use stationary or mobile RFID interrogators for inventory management applications. The kit utilizes SkyeTek's Common Blade UHF/HF RFID reader modules, comprised of the M2 HF SkyeModule and M9 UHF SkyeModule. These devices share a common software, mechanical and electrical interface that allows RFID system developers to create a single, frequency-agnostic, item-level application. The HF/UHF decision can be made either during deployment or post-deployment, as one module could be replaced by the other in the field due to their identical form factors and software/hardware interfaces. The interrogator modules could also use the same applications for data encryption, general-purpose input/output ports (for controlling external sensors or controllers), and antenna control. The M2, M9 and Item-Level Developer Kit can be ordered now. SkyeTek will begin shipping them in July.

Royal Bank of Scotland Testing RFID Payment Cards

About 1,000 employees of the [Royal Bank of Scotland](#) (RBS) began testing an RFID-enabled payment card

this week at the bank's Edinburgh headquarters, making purchases at eight merchant locations, including Starbucks and Tesco Express. RBS is partnering with <http://www.mastercardinternational.com/> MasterCard, whose ISO 14443-compliant PayPass RFID payment devices are now in use throughout the United States, to deploy the pilot test. The cards include a contact-based Maestro chip for debit transactions, so testers can use the cards at any retailer accepting Maestro. The PayPass function can be used to pay for goods only at the merchants' participating in the trial, and only for transactions totaling £10 (\$18.28) or less. The pilot will run until the end of the year.

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved