

# NFC-enabled Phones to Unlock Hotel Rooms

With Assa Abloy's first RFID-enabled lock system set to ship in October, hotels will be able to let guests use their mobile phones as room keys.

By Jonathan Collins

June 23, 2006—The hospitality unit of [Assa Abloy](#), a Stockholm-based manufacturer and supplier of locking systems, says its first RFID-enabled lock is in beta-testing at a number of European hotels. The lock—a version of the company's VingCard Signature locks—is set to ship in October.

According to Assa Abloy, RFID key cards and locks promise to overcome problems many hotels are experiencing with the magnetic-stripe cards and locks they currently employ.

"Magnetic-stripe cards make up around 99 percent of hotel room locks, but they don't always work—either because the card isn't inserted properly, or the reading head is clogged and needs maintenance," says Pascal Metivier, president of Assa Abloy's hospitality unit for Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. "With contactless, these are no longer issues."

The manufacturer says its locks will integrate with HF 13.56 MHz readers compatible with the ISO 14443 A (Mifare), ISO 14443 B and ISO 15693 standards. This will enable hotels to issue RFID-tagged room cards to their guests in a variety of formats, including low-cost paper keys, traditional plastic cards, wristbands and key fobs.

The locks will also support the near-field communication (NFC) standard, allowing customers to use NFC-enabled phones to enter their hotel rooms. That, says Metivier, could open the way for hotels and their agents to send a text message to a guest's mobile phone, containing the RFID code for the room's key.

"Waiting to check-in is the number-one complaint that customers have with hotels," says Metivier. "Sending details of the room and the key to get in using NFC means guests can arrive and go straight to their rooms."

RFID-enabled locks will cost around 20 percent more than magnetic stripe locks, Assa Abloy admits. However, the company says the lower maintenance needs of RFID-enabled locks and the increased convenience hotels can offer their guests will help offset the higher price.

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