

RFID News Roundup

Construction-safety firm using RFID tracking tool; Fluensee expands asset-tracking product to Europe; Dimatix shrinks printhead to enable 20-micron printing; Chevron to use OTI for automated fleet fueling; Fractus announces compact antenna patent.

Sept. 29—The following are news announcements made during the week of Sept. 25.

Construction-Safety Firm Using RFID Tracking Tool

VSH Hagerbach, a Swiss testing and research and development firm primarily serving the construction industry, is partnering with Wtek. The Norwegian company provides safety and training services for workers in such environments as tunnels, mines and offshore drilling, that utilize RFID for personnel tracking. Through the partnership, Wtek's RFID system will be deployed within VSH Hagerbach's network for 5 kilometers of underground tunnels in its Sagrans facility. There, Wtek will test, demonstrate and offer training courses in cooperation with VSH to improve safety for underground workers. Data from the Wtek RFID system of tags and readers is fed into a central database called Watcher, which provides information on each tagged worker's location within a mine or underground construction environment. Watcher can send maps to managers showing the last location in which each worker has been sensed.

Fluensee Expands Asset-Tracking Product to Europe

Fluensee, a Denver-based provider of RFID-enabled asset-management systems, says ConnectRFID, a U.K. RFID solutions provider, is now a member of Fluensee's value-added reseller program. As such, the company will resell and service Fluensee's products in the United Kingdom and across Europe. Fluensee will train and certify ConnectRFID to provide local implementation and support of the Fluensee products for managing valuable assets and tracking them across transportation yards and loading docks. ConnectRFID brings to the partnership its knowledge of Europe's UHF radio spectrum for RFID, and the RF transmission requirements in the European market.

Dimatix Shrinks Printhead to Enable 20-Micron Printing

One year ago, Dimatix, a provider of ink-jet products for commercial and industrial applications, released a desktop printer, the DMP 2800, enabling prototyping of a range of printed electronics and electronic components, including RFID tags (see New System for Printing Tags). The company now says the printhead—part of the replaceable cartridge used with the printer and previously capable of jetting droplets or lines of fluid as small as 10 picoliters, for printing line widths as narrow as 50 microns—can now deposit a little as 1 picoliter, allowing customers to deposit minute dots and lines at 20 to 25 microns. This is important because it will enable users to print even smaller transistors for RFID tags, enabling them to be integrated into even smaller profile inlays. Martin Schoeppler, Dimatix's VP of corporate strategic business development, says 15 percent of the customers who have purchased the DMP 2800 are using it for RFID chip and/or antenna printing. The printhead is made of silicon and is part of the printer's cartridge. This allows companies to shrink the size of printed electronics without having to replace the entire DMP 2800 device.

Chevron to Use OTI for Automated Fleet Fueling

Oil and gas producer Chevron has selected On Track Innovations (OTI) a developer of RFID-enabled payment systems, to provide its EasyFuel petroleum payment and automated fuel-management system to

Chevron. EasyFuel is an RFID-based payment system designed to track vehicle-fleet fueling for the purpose of improving accuracy, maintaining electronic records and fighting fraud. In this system, vehicles are equipped with a passive RFID tag, mounted near the gas tank and connected to the odometer, with a sensor in the gas tank's filler neck that identifies the nozzle of the gas pump at the fueling station. The tag carries such data as the vehicle's identification number and odometer reading, the minimum distance the vehicle must be driven before refueling, the fuel grade the vehicle accepts and an account number for payment. Chevron will initially deploy EasyFuel in its truck fleets in Cameroon, and OTI says Chevron expects to commission the system in additional countries, as well. The Peruvian gold-mining company Minera Yanacocha has also deployed the EasyFuel RFID payment and tracking system (see Peruvian Mine Gases Up With RFID).

Fractus Announces Compact Antenna Patent

Fractus, a company that develops antennas for short- and long-range wireless devices using Bluetooth, wireless LAN, GPS, ultrawide band and ZigBee technologies, says it has been granted what it calls the world's first technology patent for an integrated circuit (IC) package containing a fractal antenna. The technology, commonly referred to as Antenna in Package (AiP), has been granted in the United States under patent #7095372. Using fractal technology, Fractus is able to integrate its antennas with other RF components, such as the radio and RF processor, in a single IC. Fractus says it has created a solution small enough to be incorporated onto an IC and transmit data over multiple frequencies, supporting numerous short-range wireless standards. Integrating a device's antenna into its integrated circuit, Fractus adds, will dramatically reduce product development and manufacturing costs for OEMs and ODMs. The firm says it is working with semiconductor manufacturers CSR, ST Microelectronics, SiGe Semiconductors, Atheros Communications and NXP (formerly Philips Semiconductors) to bring AiP to market.

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