

Lantech Offers RFID-Enabled Stretch-Wrapper

With Symbol's RD5000 mobile reader mounted on the film-delivery system, companies can interrogate Gen 2 EPC tags while applying stretch-wrap to a pallet.

By Mark Roberti

Nov. 6, 2006—For the past two years, early adopters have struggled to mount RFID interrogators on machines that stretch plastic wrap around pallets stacked with product ready for shipment to customers. Because the wrapper's arm holding the roll of plastic moves up and down as each pallet spins or rotates, mounting the interrogator in such a way as to avoid tangling power, Ethernet and antenna cables used to be a difficult task. Now, [Lantech](#), a leading manufacturer of stretch-wrappers, says it has solved the problem.

Lantech has partnered with [Symbol Technologies](#) to mount Symbol's RD5000 mobile RFID interrogator on the moving head of its stretch-wrappers. The RD5000 has a built-in antenna, with no antenna cables. In addition, it can communicate with a local area network wirelessly, so there are no Ethernet cables needed, and it operates on battery power, so no power cable is necessary. (The device can also be hardwired into the stretch-wrapper's power supply.)

Lantech demonstrated an RFID-enabled version of its Q-300 wrapper last week at [Pack Expo](#). The RD5000 can read tags compliant with either the first- or second-generation Electronic Product Code air-interface protocol. William Caudill, Lantech's marketing manager for automatic stretch-wrapping products, says his company is offering the Symbol device on all of its turntable stretch-wrappers that apply plastic film to rotating pallets. Soon, he says, Lantech will begin offering the RD5000 on its overhead straddle stretch-wrappers, which revolve around a stationary pallets.

According to Caudill, Lantech is not interested in getting into the RFID business or becoming a reseller for Symbol. Rather, the firm will offer the RD5000 for the same price a customer buying it directly from Symbol would pay. Lantech will sell a metal bracket to mount the Symbol reader on the stretch-wrapper. The bracket can be attached with two bolts and adjusted on two axes, allowing users to angle the device's antenna to get the highest read rates. It costs \$550 and can be retrofitted on most stretch-wrappers.

End users have found that by interrogating tags on cases stacked on a spinning pallet, they can read more tags than they could if the pallet were stationary. That enables them to confirm that a pallet contains all of the cases a retail partner has ordered. Improving shipping accuracy is one potential benefit suppliers might obtain from EPC tags put on cases for retail partners.

Based in Louisville, Ky., Lantech currently has development systems at labs operated by [Exel](#), [Kimberly-Clark](#) and [Alien Technology](#) (see [Lantech to Sell RFID Stretch-Wrappers](#)). Caudill says Lantech invented stretch-wrapping technology and currently has 55,000 systems placed around the world.

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