

China Endorses ISO 18000-7 433 MHz Standard

The move will make it easier for RFID vendors to sell equipment in China, and for goods manufacturers to streamline their global supply-chain processes.

By Claire Swedberg

Nov. 9, 2006—The China State Radio Regulation Committee (SRRC) has given its approval for vendors to sell 433 MHz RFID equipment in China that is compatible with the ISO 18000-7 standard. This solidifies the protocol as an international 433 MHz RFID standard in Asia. Nearly every developed country, with the exception Japan, has developed RFID regulations specific to 433 MHz. Now, RFID technology vendors can market their wares in China more easily, as they will no longer have to gain separate approvals for each 433 MHz installation.

The SRRC, a division of the China Ministry of Information Industry, has given Savi Technology permission to sell its ISO 18000-7 RFID products in China. This makes Savi the first non-Chinese company with official approval to sell RFID products operating at 433 MHz, according to Fraser Jennings, the firm's vice president of standards and regulatory affairs.

"From the perspective of shippers of goods from China, this decision promises increased efficiency, visibility and better management of the supply chain," says Michael Wolfe, principal of the North River Consulting Group, which specializes in tracking technologies, business economics and supply-chain security. By opening their doors to 433 MHz, Wolfe says, "the Chinese moved their own interests ahead."

International companies will now have visibility using technology operating at a globally accepted frequency from the point of manufacture all the way to the port. Prior to granting approval of ISO 18000-7 s on October 30, the SRRC had allowed Savi and other international vendors to sell 433 MHz products within the country by special approval only. There was no regulatory RFID standard, Jennings explains, so each product had to be tested and receive "special dispensation before it could be sold." With approval now in place, vendors will go through testing just once to confirm that all their products comply with China's RF regulations.

Jennings says Savi Technology worked with SRRC labs, which test the performance of RFID products in environments where they will be applied, "to let them understand our RFID products." Thus far, SRRC has issued approval for five of Savi's ISO 18000-7-compliant products, including three readers and two tag lines.

This approval in China, says Jennings, signals formal acceptance from every major market in the world for the use of the ISO I8000-7 RFID standard, with the sole exception of Japan. That country's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is reviewing a regulation to permit the operation of RFID systems compliant with ISO 18000-7, which Jennings speculates could happen within the year.

This, Wolfe points out, opens up the door both to new competition, and to new partnerships. "There will certainly be a number of Chinese firms that will say, 'We can do that too, and cheaper,' [than international RFID vendors]," he says.

Companies that have invested in RFID technology for their own supply-chain management will likely celebrate the news. Dow Chemical, for example—which has been active in RFID technology for years—has sought unified international standards for RFID., Dow believes that effective standards will enhance the international supply chain.

"China's acceptance of the RFID active-tag frequency of 433 MHz technology is extremely important because of the country's large role in the movement of goods internationally," says Dave Asiala, Dow's shared services IT director. "We expect that this approval will solidify 433 MHz as an international standard and allow companies such as ours to comfortably move forward with the technology as we increase our use of RFID in Asia."

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved