

RFID News Roundup

Bank of America to test RFID payment fobs; Digital Angel scores large government contract; Parelec acquires Israeli RTLS company; hospital/physician acceptance of VeriMed exceeds expectations.

Jan. 5, 2007—The following are news announcements made during the week of Jan. 1.

Bank of America to Test RFID Payment Fobs

Bank of America says it will carry out a pilot program to test consumer interest in making payments by using keychain fobs containing RFID inlays. The fobs will act as companion devices to the traditional credit and debit cards the bank issues. Provided by card manufacturer Oberthur Card Systems, the fobs contain passive, high-frequency ISO-14443 RFID inlays made by Texas Instruments (TI) and certified by MasterCard to comply with MasterCard PayPass RFID card specifications. For the pilot, Oberthur will supply the cards and fob casings, while Bank of America will handle personalization and fulfillment in-house.

Digital Angel Scores Large Government Contract

Digital Angel, a St. Paul, Minn., provider of passive, low-frequency RFID tags for animal tracking, says it has won a multiyear contract worth up to \$10 million, to provide transponders to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. The corps will use these transponders to monitor fish populations and migration patterns, water levels, the flow of various dam passages and streams, and other conditions. To track the movements of endangered salmon, the agency is working with the Bonneville Power Authority (BPA) in the Columbia River basin, using Digital Angel's Passive Integrative Transponders (PIN)—rice-grain-sized tags consisting of a tiny coil antenna and an integrated circuit encased in glass. Details about each tagged fish, such as size and weight, are linked to the tags and stored in an online database (see RFID Antenna to Catch Fish).

Parelec Acquires Israeli RTLS Company

Parelec, a Rocky Hill, N.J., manufacturer of conductive inks for RFID tag antennas and other direct printed circuits, has acquired Precision Systems, a supplier of real-time location systems based in Raanana, Israel. The merger gives Parelec entrée into offering active RFID product solutions, while moving the company closer to its goal of developing a product line that addresses total supply chain visibility, information management, asset tracking and logistics, says Parelec president Geva Barash. Parelec is acquiring a network of resellers to distribute and install Precision Systems' iLocate real-time location system, which uses 433 MHz bidirectional proprietary active tags to locate assets. The system can also support data encryption to protect the tag data. Parelec indicates it will continue to work with its pool of label converters to bring its printed RFID tag antennas to market, adding that although the acquisition of Precision Systems is complete, it will not yet reveal the terms of the deal. The firm has moved the former Precision Systems facility in Israel to a new Parelec office, also located in Israel, and has hired additional staff at that location.

Hospital/Physician Acceptance of VeriMed Exceeds Expectations

VeriMed, a system medical workers can use to access the records of patients carrying an implanted VeriChip RFID tag, says its enrollment has been higher than its provider, the VeriChip Corporation, had anticipated. As of the end of 2006, 392 hospitals and 1,209 physicians had enrolled in VeriMed, indicating they had been trained how to use the interrogator and database to call up records of patients embedded with the tag. During

the six-month period from July to December 2006, the number of participating physicians increased from 275 to 1,209, representing a 340 percent gain. During the same time period, VeriChip recorded a 256 percent increase in the number of medical facilities enrolled in the VeriMed Network. These totals exceed previously stated year-end goals of 200 hospitals and 1,000 physicians. VeriChip says part of the increase resulted from a campaign with the National Stroke Association (NSA) to drum up support for the system. In July, VeriChip announced a two-year pilot program with Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey (see Insurer Running VeriChip Trial) to test the system's effectiveness. To date, 222 people have enrolled in the program by having the tag embedded subdermally; in July, only 100 people had enrolled. VeriChip is a subsidiary of Applied Digital, as is Digital Angel, which sells similar tags for animal tracking and which recently announced a large contract with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (see Digital Angel Scores Large Government Contract, above).

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved