

RFID News Roundup

DOD finalizes RFID regulations; Chertoff says RFID no longer in US-VISIT exit plans; ETSI approves Psion Teklogix reader module; Tully's now accepting PayPass; FCC certifies SAW reader from CTR.

Feb. 16, 2007—The following are news announcements made during the week of Feb. 12.

DOD Finalizes RFID Regulations

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) issued a final ruling, with some changes, compared with a May 2006 interim amendment to its Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS). The ruling now sets a March 1, 2007, cut-off date for the use of EPC Gen 1 tags (Class 0 and Class 1) by suppliers who had the RFID mandate written into their contracts after May 19, 2006. After the deadline, the DOD will only accept shipments from those suppliers carrying EPC Gen 2 tags. Any supplier whose contract was rewritten to include the tagging requirement before May 19, 2006—the date of the RFID interim rule—will be able to continue to use Gen 1 tags after March 1. The DOD, in a Federal Register notice published on Feb. 12, said it will allow the use of older RFID Gen 1 tags under all new contracts through March 1. This ruling is meant to allow suppliers to use the tag standard in effect at the time of the contract award, including the tagging mandate. The final DFARS rule requires contractors to affix passive RFID tags to cases and pallets when shipping packaged petroleum, lubricants, oils, preservatives, chemicals, additives, construction and barrier materials, or medical materials to 19 specified DOD supply depots in the contiguous United States. All of these locations are now outfitted with the RFID hardware and software infrastructure needed to read and process tag data.

Chertoff Says RFID No Longer in US-VISIT Exit Plans

The Department of Homeland Security's Michael Chertoff last week told the House Homeland Security Committee that the US-VISIT Program is no longer conducting a test of RFID technology, according to DHS spokesman Russ Knocke. The agency had been attempting to track the exits of visitors leaving the country, through the use of RFID inlays embedded in a document called an I-94 form, issued to visitors who do not require a visa. Currently, the U.S. government has no means of tracking the exits of these visitors at land and sea ports, so supporters hoped the RFID-tagged I-94 forms might provide this information. However, the test, which was being conducted at several land border crossing points, showed poor read rates and reliability of the passive UHF tags embedded in the forms. The Government Accountability Office (GAO), late last year, issued a report detailing the poor performance of the technology (see GAO Report Highlights RFID Weaknesses in US-VISIT), and Chertoff referenced this report in his explanation of why US-VISIT is stopping the RFID test.

ETSI Approves Psion Teklogix Reader Module

The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) has certified the RD7950 RFID reader module made by Mississauga, Ontario-based RFID reader manufacturer Psion Teklogix as compliant with ETSI's EN 302 208 spectrum use regulation. This regulation requires interrogators to listen for RF traffic before transmitting on a particular channel within the ETSI-sanctioned 865-868MHz UHF frequency band. The RD7950 reader module is embedded in Psion Teklogix's 7535 G2 and 7530 rugged handheld computers. The module reads EPC Gen 2 and Gen 1 Class 1, 0+ and 0 tags, as well as ISO 18000-6b and EM Micro tags. The

RD7950 RFID reader module is available to customers through the company's global sales offices and value-added resellers.

Tully's Now Accepting PayPass

Consumers can now make purchases with MasterCard RFID-enabled PayPass credit or debit cards at select Tully's Coffee retail locations. The company says its 90 corporate-owned stores will all accept PayPass by the end of the first quarter of 2007. Tully's is installing RFID interrogators to read the cards and forward the card data to Tully's point-of-sale system. The Northwest coffee brewer says it is accepting PayPass to provide added convenience for its customers, who can now pay for purchases by swiping the card over a reader. What's more, PayPass purchases under \$25 do not require a customer signature. Tully's will also continue to accept traditional magnetic-stripe payment cards.

FCC Certifies SAW Reader from CTR

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has certified a surface acoustic wave (SAW) tag interrogator made by Carinthian Tech Research (CTR), an Austrian provider of automatic-identification technologies, for use in the United States, according to Airgate Technologies a Texas-based reseller of the CTR device. SAW tags do not contain a silicon chip, but instead use a piezoelectric crystal connected to an antenna that receives an interrogator's RF signal and transmits a return signal. AirGate has delivered development systems to several Fortune 1000 companies, as well as 3M, NASA's Johnson Space Center and the U.S. Navy. Mike Sheriff, president and CEO of Airgate, says its SAW customers have received the CTR tags and readers, but that none have yet deployed the equipment because they are awaiting FCC certification. SAW technology is not impacted by metals and liquids, which cause interference in passive silicon-based tags. SAW tags can also provide temperature readings or other sensor data (see Airgate Sees a Market for SAW).

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