

Metro Fleshes Out Its RFID Plans

The retailer will install Intermec interrogators at 130 Cash & Carry wholesale stores and Sirit models at 99 Real hypermarkets.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

July 3, 2007—Just weeks after informing its top product suppliers that they'll need to RFID-tag all shipments to 180 of its German stores starting in October (see [Metro Pushes Pallet Tagging](#)), [Metro](#) and RFID equipment vendors have provided details about how the retailer and its suppliers will make those plans a reality.

"At [Metro Cash & Carry](#) wholesale stores, we are installing readers from [Intermec](#); the systems integrator is [IBM](#)," explains Gerd Wolfram, managing director of [Metro Group Information Technology](#) (MGI). "Our [Real](#) hypermarkets will be equipped with readers from [Sirit](#); [Checkpoint](#) is the systems integrator. That means we have a two-supplier strategy. In all locations, we will install TAP [Tag Acquisition Processor] servers from [Reva](#)."

In an effort to read the RFID tags on incoming shipments of merchandise, Metro is installing a Sirit Infinity 510 Gen 2 interrogator at each of its 99 Real hypermarket locations in Germany, according to an announcement from the Toronto-based RFID hardware provider. And Intermec, a hardware provider based in Everett, Wash., says Metro has approved two of its RFID starter packs for sale to Metro suppliers, enabling them to apply and encode RFID tags to shipments of goods. The announcements arrive on the heels of a statement released earlier this week, regarding Metro's use of Reva's TAP reader network appliances to manage its RFID reader infrastructure (see [Metro Rolling Out Reva's Reader Network Appliance](#)).

Sirit says Metro has been testing the Infinity 510 against a number of other EPC Gen 2-compliant readers for several months, and that it has participated in Metro's [Future Store](#), a concept store designed to test RFID and other technologies under real-world conditions. Through these efforts, says Lorelei Luchkiw, Sirit's director of marketing and communications, the company was able to refine its Infinity 510 product offering to meet the specific needs of Metro and other retailers. The 510 reader was recently tested against six other interrogators certified by the [European Telecommunications Standards Institute](#) (ETSI) to operate under current RF regulations in the European Union. Conducted by systems integrator [ODIN Technologies](#), the tests showed that Sirit fared well against the other readers and lead in at least one specific test (see [ODIN Releases First Benchmark of European RFID Readers](#)).

Intermec has also been a long-time partner on the Future Store project. Chris Kelley, Intermec's director of RFID, says Metro has tested its hardware for a number of years, and has offered its stamp of approval to the start kits based on its positive experience with Intermec's readers and printer-encoders.

One of the starter kits contains an Intermec PM4i RFID printer-encoder, as well as Intermec's SF51 Bluetooth bar-code scanner. These devices could be used in a typical slap-and-ship scenario, Kelley says, with workers scanning the bar-code label on each case of goods, then using the data encoded to the bar code to generate an RFID label from the PM4i printer-encoder. The EPC encoded to the label's inlay would be associated with the

bar-code data in the user's database.

RELATED_ARTICLES In addition to the above devices, the second starter kit also comes with an Intermec RFID portal reader, which incorporates a durable antenna rack designed to mount around dock doors. The portal reader would use the Intermec IF61 interrogator. End users would employ the portal reader to verify that all tags placed on cases and pallets were properly encoded and shipped in functional condition.

By September, according to Intermec, Metro plans to roll out around 130 IF61-equipped RFID portals at its Cash & Carry stores, as well as its Varena distribution center, near Hamm, Germany.

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