

RFID News Roundup

Sokymat's new EPC Gen 2 asset-tracking tag and compact HF tags; Emerson & Cuming announces new metal-mount tag; Schreiner buys X-ident; HF tag maker opens Brazilian plant to serve growing market; Newham College launches RFID lab; NFC Forum issues tag specs; RFID growth expected to triple in U.S. health-care sector.

Aug. 3, 2007—The following are news announcements made during the week of July 30.

Sokymat's New EPC Gen 2 Asset-Tracking Tag and Compact HF Tags

Tag maker Sokymat, a manufacturer of RFID components, has announced a new passive UHF EPC Gen 2 tag designed for asset-tracking applications, as well as a new family of HF tags for tracking small items. The asset-tracking tag, the Sokymat InLine 55/86 UHF EPC Gen 2 transponder, operates in the 869 to 915 MHz frequency range and has dimensions close to that of an access control card: 8.6 centimeters by 5.5 centimeters, and 0.8 centimeters thick. The company designed the tag for pallets, crates or other assets that need to be reliably identified at long distances. It has a read range of up to 20 feet when mounted on wood or plastic materials, which do not generally inhibit UHF RF signals. Samples of the new transponder are now available. The company has also developed a new family of high-frequency (13.56 MHz) tags designed for applications requiring tags with a small footprint. Each tag in the Sokymat Piccolino series has a diameter smaller than that of a Eurocent coin. The Piccolino 95 MY-D 10K tag, compliant with the ISO 15693 standard, has a diameter of .95 cm is available with 1, 2 or 10 kilobits of a memory. The Piccolino 75 tag has a diameter of .75 cm and is offered with 1 or 2 kilobits of memory. Sokymat sources its 13.56 MHz chips from a range of chipmakers, including NXP Semiconductors, STMicroelectronics and EM Microelectronic. Samples of the new Piccolino tags will be available this month, though pricing has not yet been released.

Emerson & Cuming Announces New Metal-Mount Tag

Emerson & Cuming Microwave Products, a maker of conductive adhesives and other industrial materials, has announced its ECCOPAD MetalTag, a passive RFID tag with an integrated insulating backing that makes the tag readable when mounted on objects containing metal or liquid—materials that reflect or absorb RF signals, often hampering the readability of passive UHF RFID tags. According to the company, the tag employs the EPC Gen 2 air interface, measures 0.625 by 2.5 inches, and has an 8-foot read range. The tag costs \$2 in low quantities, which the company says is 70 percent less than its last, comparable tag. Discounts are available for high-quantity orders. The company says the tag's small footprint makes it useful for tracking small objects with high metal content, such as laptop computers, tools and electronic components. The ECCOPAD MetalTag is available now in quantities of up to 25 tags.

Schreiner Buys X-ident

Schreiner Group, a conglomerate with holdings that include RFID solutions provider LogiData, has acquired all shares of X-ident, a manufacturer of RFID inlays, smart cards and RFID tickets for transportation cards and events. X-ident supplied the tickets for the 2006 FIFA World Cup, and in 2007 has already provided more than 30 million tickets for the Moscow Subway. The deal went into effect on July 20, 2007. By acquiring X-ident, Schreiner Group says it has added 160 million RFID labels, tickets and tags to its yearly production capacity. X-ident will continue its operations as part of the Schreiner Group.

HF Tag Maker Opens Brazilian Plant to Serve Growing Market

Smartrac, a Dutch manufacturer of passive high-frequency RFID inlays for passports, transit and payment cards, says it has started production of its inlays in Brazil through a new subsidiary, Smartrac Tecnologia Indústria e Comercio da Amazônia, headquartered in Manaus, in the country's Amazonas province. The company is initially producing RFID inlays for public transport and access-control applications in Brazil. The company believes Brazil is one of the world's most important RFID growth markets. Current production capacity at the Brazilian location is approximately 1 million units per month, and will expand to 2 million units by the end of this year to meet the demand.

Newham College Launches RFID Lab

Newham College of Further Education, located in East London, together with industry sponsors Cisco Systems, Intermec Technologies, Wavetrend, Trovan, Sonitor, Integral RFID, RadiantWave and RedPrairie, plans to launch an RFID training facility. The mission of the Discovery Lab, which opened on July 20, is to provide potential RFID end users an interactive environment in which they can learn about the technology. The lab features a range of RFID hardware and solutions, including smart shelves with embedded reader antennas for inventory applications. The center will provide RFID training conducted by RFID4U, which is authorized by the Computer Technology Industry Association to administer the CompTIA RFID+ test, a vendor-neutral professional certification that validates a professional's knowledge and skills in the areas of installation, maintenance, repair and upkeep of RFID systems.

NFC Forum Issues Interrogator, Tag Specs

The NFC Forum, an association promoting the adoption of near-field communication (NFC) technology, announced the publication of four tag specifications around which it plans to standardize NFC readers. NFC technology is being implemented to let consumers make payments, gather information and eventually exchange data with other mobile electronic devices using passive high-frequency RFID tags and interrogators. The forum maintains that any NFC interrogator must be able to both read and write to these four tag types, says David Turner, who works for Microsoft's mobile and embedded devices (MED) division, and is responsible for leading MED's engagement in the NFC Forum. The NFC Forum is publishing the four tag specifications, he says, so manufacturers of interrogators designed for NFC applications can know which tag standards the devices will need to be able to read to qualify for NFC Forum standards testing. The four tag specifications are based on the ISO 14443A and ISO 14443B standards, as well as Sony's FeliCa specification. The NFC Forum is currently developing the certification tests it will administer to reader makers looking to have their products certified as standard NFC readers. The tag specs are available to the public for download at no charge from NFC Forum's Web site.

RFID Growth Expected to Triple in U.S. Health-Care Sector

The sales of RFID systems to the U.S. health-care industry is expected to more than triple in the next three years, according to a report published by market research and analysis firm Kalorama Information, a Rockville, Md., company specializing in the health-care and medical markets. The firm estimates that annual sales of RFID technologies in the U.S. health-care market stand at about \$297 million in 2007, but that figure is expected to jump to more than \$1 billion by 2010 and \$3.1 billion by 2012, according to the new report, entitled "RFID Opportunities in Healthcare in the U.S." Other market studies predict strong growth of RFID in the health-care industry, though at least one, by IDTechEx, has smaller projections. In its report "RFID in Healthcare 2006-2016," IDTechEx says the worldwide market for RFID tags and systems in health care will rise from \$90 million this year to \$2.1 billion by 2016 (see Report Sees Sharp Rise in Pharma RFID). Kalorama explains that RFID is being considered by hospitals, nursing homes, pharmaceutical manufacturers and pharmacies that want to use the technology to track assets, better manage inventory, monitor patients in real time, and track medicine and its dispensing. The report is available now for \$3,995, directly from Kalorama Information, and is also available from Marketresearch.com.