

RFID News Roundup

Pan Am Games security based on RFID badges; tag market nears \$1 billion; Ekahau, VeriChip collaborate on real-time location systems; Dollywood visitors paying with Sunny Money.

Aug. 17, 2007—The following are news announcements made during the week of Aug. 13.

Pan Am Games Security Based on RFID Badges

For the last two weeks of July, more than 5,600 athletes competed in the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This week, 1,300 physically challenged athletes are competing in the Parapan American Games in the same Rio venues, Aug. 12 to 19. For both events, information technology and security management provider [Atos Origin](#) issued RFID-enabled 150,000 accreditation badges to the athletes, their coaching staff, medics, grounds personnel, event organizers, media and others involved in the games, as part of a large-scale, networked access-control and security system covering 120 sporting venues, as well as transportation hubs and games-related meeting places. A passive, ultra-high frequency inlay is embedded in each badge and read by fixed-position or handheld RFID interrogators. This enables security officers to authenticate the identity of each accredited person at the games, says Chris Kelley, director of RFID at [Intermec](#), which supplied the tags and readers used in the application. At various checkpoints at the competition venues, athletes and other credentialed participants present RFID-enabled ID badges to security officers, who read the data encoded to the embedded chip and access a database to verify whether entrance should be granted. Citing concerns over keeping the security protocol under wraps, neither Atos Origin nor Intermec will release the exact RFID air-interface protocol and business processes being used to inspect and authenticate the credentials.

Tag Market Nears \$1 Billion

Market research and strategy consulting firm [Venture Development Corp.](#) (VDC) says the global market for RFID transponders—active, passive and semi-passive tags—approached \$1 billion in 2006 and is expected to grow at a compounded annual rate of 24 percent through 2008. The group notes that markets around the globe have shown relatively uniform growth, with Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) accounting for slightly more than 35 percent of total revenues, and the Americas and Asia-Pacific region making up most of the remaining market. VDC senses a change in this trend, however, with revenues from the Americas and Asia-Pacific expected to outpace the EMEA region over the next three to five years. In fact, VDC predicts that the Asia-Pacific region will account for nearly 50 percent of all transponder unit shipments by 2008. The group reports that more than 1.2 billion RFID transponders were shipped in 2006, and expects that figure to nearly double by 2008.

Ekahau, VeriChip Collaborate on Real-Time Location Systems

[Ekahau](#), a provider of Wi-Fi-based real-time location systems (RTLS), has teamed with [Xmark](#), a [VeriChip](#) subsidiary and maker of RFID systems for tracking people and assets. The partnership—primarily a marketing agreement—calls for the two companies to collaborate on products combining their technologies to suit specific customers needs. Based in Ottawa, Ontario, Xmark provides monitoring and tracking systems that leverage active RFID tags. "We've found that a lot of times, customers require an assembly of technology," says Robert Lee, VP of health-care safety at Xmark. "Ekahau will call us because their customer wants a tamper-resistant product of added security components. On the flip side, there may be a component that could

satisfy our customer's request to use a positioning-enabled Wi-Fi system like Ekahau's." The company's Hugs and Halo systems are designed to help prevent infants from being removed from a hospital without permission, while RoamAlert is intended to keep patients—such as those with Alzheimer's—from wandering unattended. The infant and patient-monitoring systems offer other protections as well, such as skin-sensing capabilities that can trigger an alert when a tag is removed from a wearer. Additionally, the monitoring systems will trigger an alarm if, for instance, someone tries to exit via a monitored door without authorization, a tag's strap has been cut or tampered with, the system fails to detect a tag's signal for a specified time period, or the tag's battery power runs low. Xmark also offers MyCall, which caregivers can use to issue emergency alerts, and Assetrac, for monitoring and managing assets. Xmark's active tags use a variety of frequencies that communicate via proprietary air-interface protocols. For example, the asset-tracking solution, Assetrac, leverages 434 MHz. Some tags incorporate dual frequencies, Lee says. Ekahau, based in Saratoga, Calif., with offices in Virginia, Finland and Hong Kong, offers the Ekahau RTLS solution for tracking patients and assets. The system operates over an 802.11 WLAN and incorporates the Ekahau Positioning Engine (EPE) server, battery-powered Wi-Fi RFID tags and application software.

Dollywood Visitors Paying With Sunny Money

Precision Dynamics Corp. (PDC), a provider of automatic wristband identification solutions, says Dollywood's Splash Country Water Adventure Park in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., is offering its daily and season-pass guests an RFID-based wristband system as an alternative to using cash or credit cards to pay for goods and services. Upon arrival, guests can request the wristbands, which Dollywood has branded Sunny Money, at any food or merchandise vendor location within the park. They can then create and fund an account, which is linked to the unique code written, in an encrypted format, to the ISO 16693-compliant, 13.56 MHz RFID inlay located inside the wristband. Visitors can use either credit or debit cards or cash to fund the account. If they do not deplete all funds linked to a wristband during a visit, they can bring it back and continue using it the next time they visit.

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