

RF Technologies, OSI Integrate RFID-Generated Alerts With Telephony

A single IP handset can receive alerts emitted by RFID devices, as well as fire and smoke detectors, and can also be used to receive and place phone calls.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Sept. 6, 2007—Health-care work can often be stressful. The addition of physical burdens can make the job even tougher. To wit: many health-care workers must carry a multitude of communication devices during their daily rounds, in order to remain accessible and mobile.

"[Health-care workers] are starting to look like cops, with all the stuff hanging from their belts," says Jim Frost, vice president of sales for [RF Technologies](#), a provider of RFID-enabled communication systems for the health-care industry. "They might carry a wireless [landline] phone, a cell phone and multiple pagers."

For instance, if a nursing home patient, or a resident at a senior-care facility, presses an RFID-enabled call button for help, an alert appears on a pager. To respond, an employee must use a phone—which the worker might not be carrying—to call an administrator. In some facilities, staff members also carry separate pagers for receiving alerts generated by fire or smoke detectors.

To streamline the various communications systems used by health-care facilities, RF Technologies has teamed with [Office Solutions Inc.](#) (OSI), an integrator of telecommunications platforms (made by AT&T, Avaya and Cisco) for the health-care industry. The partners have worked to develop a single platform combining RF Technology's patient-safety tools with standard Internet protocol (IP) telecommunication systems, so that health-care workers can access a single platform—and device—for all communication needs and alerts.

[Brookdale Senior Living](#), an organization that operates 547 senior residence and care properties across the United States, has already implemented the combined platform at nearly 80 of its facilities, according to RF Technologies. [Senior Housing Consultants](#), which constructs and manages residences and nursing facilities for seniors across Iowa, is beginning to install the RF Technologies/OSI platform across more than 15 facilities. Josh Palma, project manager with Senior Housing Consultants, says he has received very positive feedback from health-care workers who have begun using the system.

The cordless IP landline phones that OSI provides very much resemble conventional cellular phones, Frost says, though they are a bit larger. Previously, a health-care worker would have had to carry a pager to receive alerts generated by one of the two RFID systems provided by RF Technologies. The company uses small dual-frequency (262 MHz and 381 MHz) active tags embedded into wristbands or pendants for its patient- or resident-monitoring systems.

RF Technologies' Code Alert Wandering Management Solution is designed to help caregivers track the movements of residents at assisted-living facilities, or patients in health-care facilities, from wandering off the premises. Its Code Alert Wireless Call Solution enables a resident or patient to summon help quickly—even

when away from a nurse call button integrated into a hospital bed—by pressing a button built into an active RFID tag worn as a pendant.

RELATED_ARTICLES To manage the data generated by multiple alerting systems, RF Technologies developed software that integrates the alerts into a common database and forwards them, via a facility's IP phone network, to the handsets assigned to the appropriate health-care workers. A single handset can receive alerts generated by RF Technologies' RFID devices, as well as fire and smoke detectors—and, of course, the handset can also be used to receive and place phone calls.

Gus Talhami, an account executive with RF Technologies, says that using the integrated platform should help health-care workers respond more quickly to calls and alerts, since they won't have to search for or use several different mobile devices.

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