

Alien Adds Five Products to Gen 2 Portfolio

Alien Technology's CEO told EPC Connection attendees that the company is seeing significant sales growth for closed-loop applications of RFID, rather than demand from goods manufacturers seeking to comply with retail-industry tagging mandates.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Oct. 4, 2007—[Alien Technology](#) introduced its five latest Gen 2 EPC RFID products at this week's [EPC Connection 2007](#) conference in Chicago: two tag inlays, two interrogators and a portal. Alien is targeting these products at a range of applications. Addressing conference attendees, Alien CEO George Everhart said his company is seeing significant sales growth for closed-loop applications of RFID outside the supply chain, rather than demand from companies facing tagging mandates in the retail sector.

The Squiggle-SQ inlay, measuring 23 mm by 23 mm, is intended for tagging pharmaceuticals or other small-profile products. The inlay is tuned to operate best in the 902 to 928 MHz frequency range, used in North America. However, says Ronny Haraldsvik, Alien's vice president of marketing and industry relations, the SQ and Alien's other new products should also perform well across the various UHF bands used around the world. The Squiggle-SQ will be available for sampling in October, the company reports, with volume production expected to commence in December.

The other inlay, the Squiggle-SH, is built to be embedded in a 3-by-3-inch label—a size widely used in Asia, Haraldsvik says—but offers a read range sufficient for use in a pallet tag as well. (Most EPC Gen 2 inlays used in pallet labels measure 4 inches or greater.) The Squiggle-SH inlay will be available in small quantities in December, with volume production expected in the first quarter of 2008.

As with Alien's other inlay products, Haraldsvik says, the Squiggle-SG and Squiggle-SH contain the company's Higgs chip, manufactured at Alien's plant in Fargo, N.D. According to Haraldsvik, the firm is transitioning away from outsourcing its Gen 2 chips.

The company's latest interrogators are the ALR-9900 and ALR-9650 models. A fixed-position reader, the ALR-9900 is designed for use inside warehouses or other environments where multiple interrogators are likely to operate simultaneously. According to Alien, this reader is certified by [EPCglobal](#) as complying with the Gen 2 air-interface standard.

Compared with the Alien ALR-9800 reader, the company notes, the ALR-9900 is better able to reject RF interference to ensure higher read rates in RF-noisy environments. Available now, the ALR-9900 costs \$2,199. The ALR-9900EU, a version tuned to operate within the European Union's regulations for UHF devices, is expected to become available early next year.

At 9 inches square, the ALR-9650 is a low-profile interrogator containing a built-in antenna. Its small size is enabled, in part, by an Intel R1000 transceiver chip, which integrates most of the discrete elements used in a reader module onto a single IC. Alien says this model, which can be operated using power-over-Ethernet (POE), is suited for applications requiring that readers be installed in tight spaces, or for consumer-facing

applications in which users opt for low-profile equipment. The ALR-9650 has a list price of \$1,099 and will be available in December.

RELATED_ARTICLES Alien calls the ALR-9824 RFID portal an easy-to-install dock-door solution in a durable casing. The portal contains the company's ALR-9800 Gen 2 RFID reader, including four antennas, and is available now at a cost of \$5,145.

Alien reports that all of its interrogators are shipped with the company's proprietary reader protocol. Haraldsvik notes, however, that upon request, Alien will ship the devices with a reader protocol compliant with EPCglobal's recently ratified low-level reader protocol (LLRP) standard. LLRP is designed to enable readers to more easily link with readers from a variety of manufacturers.

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