

RFID News Roundup

BASF, Siemens, PolyIC join others to advance printable RFID tags; UPM to make RFID tags in China; Awarepoint unveils sterilizable active RFID asset tag; NJ Transit to test contactless bank cards; 3M adds PCTS' RTLS to its portfolio of health-care solutions; GS1 US launches RFID forum on health care and pharmaceuticals.

Feb. 28, 2008—The following are news announcements made during the past week.

BASF, Siemens, PolyIC Join Others to Advance Printable RFID Tags

A consortium of chipmakers, chemicals companies and high-tech firms has teamed up on a project to advance the development of high-performance printable RFID tags. The project, known as MaDriX, is sponsored by the [German Federal Ministry of Education and Research](#) (BMBF). Participants include [PolyIC](#), which is spearheading the three-year project, along with [BASF](#), [Evonik Industries](#), [Elantas Beck](#) and [Siemens](#). The project's total investment is €15 million (\$22.6 million). PolyIC's focus will be on defining a printed RFID tag's component characterization, the process development to develop such a tag and setting up demonstrators. BASF, Evonik Industries and Elantas Beck will supply new materials to produce semiconductors and insulators for use in electronic circuits. Siemens is developing new real-time visual print inspection processes for quality control in the printing process. A number of universities and research institutes are involved in the MaDriX project as well, and the [German Aerospace Center](#) (DLR) is also a project sponsor. Printed RFID tags are still years away—the consortium says such tags are likely to be available within the next decade—but they've already generated a great deal of interest. That's because the technology would allow RFID to be printed directly on a package, similar to bar codes, and would cost less than current RFID tags. But much research still needs to be done (see [Printed RFID Tags Still Several Years Away](#)), and that's the consortium's mission.

UPM to Make RFID Tags in China

[UPM Raflatac](#) has announced that in the third quarter of 2008, it will begin production of high-frequency (HF) and ultra-high frequency (UHF) passive RFID tags and inlays in Guangzhou, the capital of southern China's Guangdong province. The initial RFID tag production capacity of the Guangzhou facility will be 100 million pieces per year, the company reports, and production can easily be scaled up to hundreds of millions if so warranted by market demand. China's RFID market continues to grow—it reached 1.1 billion yuan (\$150 million) in the second quarter of 2007, increasing 23.4 percent quarter on quarter, according to [Analysys International](#), a consultancy that reports on China's technology, media and telecom industries. UPM Raflatac currently manufactures RFID tags and inlays in Jyväskylä, Finland, and in Fletcher, N.C.

Awarepoint Unveils Sterilizable Active RFID Asset Tag

Real-time location systems (RTLS) provider [Awarepoint](#) has introduced an active 2.48 GHz RFID tag that it claims can withstand steam autoclave cycles at temperatures of up to 135 degrees Celsius (275 degrees Fahrenheit), as well as common liquid sterilization methods. The new T2S tag transmits its unique ID over the 802.15.4 (ZigBee) communications protocol. Less than 1.5 inches in width and length, the T2S can remain on assets as they undergo sterilization, thus enabling hospitals and health-care organizations to monitor the sterilization process. The tag's battery has a life span of about five years. The Awarepoint system can alert appropriate staff (via e-mail, pager or system reporting) if the sterile protocol has been compromised.

NJ Transit to Test Contactless Bank Cards

NJ Transit and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey are teaming up to test RFID-enabled contactless bank cards from MasterCard at all 13 Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH) train stations, as well as on two connecting NJ Transit bus routes. The eight-month pilot, slated to commence in early 2009 after MasterCard develops, installs and tests the system, will let customers pay for transit using contactless bank cards, key fobs, cell phones and other devices. The test will help determine if customers could ultimately use these devices to pay for fares on all of the region's transportation systems, including Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) subways and buses in New York City. The pilot will be compatible with the MTA's current test of contactless bank cards in the New York City subway system. That test leverages MasterCard's contactless PayPass payment system, which uses cards with both the traditional magnetic strip found in other credit cards and the PayPass RFID inlay, which operates at 13.56 MHz and has a short read range of 2 to 3 centimeters (see RFID to Ride N.Y. Subways). During the NJ Transit test, contactless payment will be available exclusively to MasterCard PayPass customers and other bank-issued contactless card customers.

3M Adds PCTS' RTLS to Its Portfolio of Health-care Solutions

The Track and Trace Solutions division of 3M has announced that its portfolio of health-care software will include a real-time workflow automation and tracking system from Patient Care Technology Systems (PCTS), located in Mission Viejo, Calif. PCTS' Amelior software, when combined with real-time location systems (RTLS), can be employed to track patients, staff and assets in health-care facilities. Amelior works with RTLS systems leveraging RFID, ultrasound, Wi-Fi access points and infrared sensors. The Amelior software suite includes the Amelior ORTracker, designed to track patients and staff within surgical departments, and incorporates rules and algorithms to monitor workflow, patient flow, surgical schedules and processes. In 2007, 3M and the Mayo Clinic worked together on a solution that would enable the hospital to track the movement of specimens and tissue samples from its surgical suites to its pathology labs (see At Mayo Clinic, RFID Tracks Biopsies). What's more, 3M says it is also developing track-and-trace applications for other markets, such as pharmaceuticals, supply chain security and optimization, heavy industrial processes such as construction and mining, safety and protection of people, and high-value assets.

GS1 US Launches RFID Forum on Health Care and Pharmaceuticals

GS1 US, the U.S. arm of GS1, a private, nonprofit standards setter for the global supply chain, has announced the inaugural Healthcare US Workgroup Forum, to be held March 11-12 at the Hilton Lincoln Centre in Dallas, Texas. The forum will focus on how the implementation of GS1 standards can help improve patient safety and supply chain efficiency, as well as what is needed to help drive implementation of the standards. It is open to health-care professionals responsible for patient safety and supply chain efficiency, including distributors, group purchasing organizations (GPOs), health-care providers, industry associations, manufacturers, pharmacies and solution providers. According to GS1 US, participants will have the opportunity to shape the future of the U.S. health-care industry by helping define roadmaps for adoption and implementation and, ultimately, best practices for the industry. Attendees can take part in a variety of workgroups, including product identification, which will focus on developing implementation tools for the use and correct application of the Global Trade Item Number (GTIN) in the U.S. health-care system; location identification, which will focus on developing tools for the use and correct application of the Global Location Number (GLN); and Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN) implementation, which will focus on developing implementation tools that will drive the use of the GDSN. To register for the GS1 Healthcare US Workgroup Forum, visit GS1 US Healthcare or e-mail GS1HCUSEVENTS@gs1us.org.