

Terso Offers EPC-Enabled Medical Cabinets

The company is providing a version of its enclosures that uses EPC Gen 2 technology to secure medications and medical devices, as well as to monitor inventory levels.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Aug. 27, 2008—[Terso Solutions](#), a Madison, Wisc.-based RFID solutions provider for the health-care industry, has announced that beginning in October, it plans to begin offering its RFID-enabled cabinets with tags and interrogators compliant with the UHF EPC Gen 2 air-interface standard. The cabinets are utilized to secure and track the use of medical supplies, and until now have employed passive RFID tags and readers operating at 2.45 GHz, using a proprietary interface.

Terso is a spin-off of life-sciences firm [Promega](#), which began developing RFID solutions for tracking medical supplies in 2000. According to Terso, its RFID cabinets, refrigerators and freezers—used to store reagents, vaccines and other temperature-sensitive substances—are currently in 500 hospitals, laboratories and other facilities that store medical devices and consumables. One such customer, the [University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center](#), has been using the cabinets to track medical supplies since 2003 (see [Texas Lab Stocks Up With RFID](#)).

According to Joe Pleshek, the company's director of business development, Terso opted to begin supporting the UHF EPC standard in order to make its offering more attractive to customers who may already be employing—or who plan to use—UHF EPC tags and readers to track consumables, reusable assets or patients within their facilities.

Terso combines the cabinets, freezers and refrigerators with software and RFID-based personnel identity cards. Once issued the cards, employees can present them to a reader embedded in the enclosure. The interrogator transmits the unique ID encoded to the card to a central database. If the card's carrier is authorized to access the enclosure, the lock securing the enclosure is released. The employee may then open the enclosure and remove the required drugs, equipment or other supplies stored within.

All goods inside an enclosure are RFID-tagged, and an interrogator maintains a perpetual inventory count of those items. When a tag is no longer read, the software removes it from the inventory and associates it with the ID of the personnel who most recently accessed the enclosure. The software is then used to generate replenishment orders, in order to maintain optimal inventory levels of the goods within the enclosure.

RELATED_ARTICLES Terso is partnering with [Impinj](#) to outfit the cabinets with UHF EPC interrogators. According to Terso, the readers will be available in its refrigerators and freezers by the end of this year. Customers can select the exact make and model of UHF EPC tag they wish to use, based on the tag vendors with whom they already work, or based on the tag form factor that operates best with the consumables or assets they wish to place within the enclosures.

A number of Terso customers are currently evaluating the UHF EPC cabinets in beta tests, Pleshek says. "We work with them to identify and qualify the best tag for [cabinet] application and product mix," he explains. In

addition to the new cabinets, Terso will continue to sell and support its legacy 2.45 GHz-based enclosures as well.

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