

RFID News Roundup

Global RFID market to reach \$5.3 billion this year; RF Code unveils RFID solution for monitoring data center environment; French retailer launches NFC payment trial; California residential/retail park implements RFID-enabled parking system; CSL's EPC Gen 2 handheld reader available in North America; Omni-ID's UHF tethered tag for small assets; Sirit and Mikoh partner on passive RFID vehicle identification system.

Nov. 6, 2008—The following are news announcements made during the past week.

Global RFID Market to Reach \$5.3 Billion This Year

The worldwide RFID market will exceed \$5.3 billion in 2008, according to a forecast from [ABI Research](#), which estimates the market will grow to \$9.8 billion in 2013. The research firm says that although this growth might not seem impressive—and that traditional applications such as access control and automatic vehicle identification will dominate the market in the near-term—its growth will accelerate within about two and a half years due to high-growth, high-volume applications such as supply chain management, ID documents, ticketing and contactless payment. ABI Research notes that it's too early to determine the global economy's impact on the RFID market, and that investments are still being made in RFID companies. What's more, the firm adds, consolidation continues and contracts are being awarded. In a prepared statement, research director Michael Liard said, "We understand that the impact of economic events is often not immediate, however, and we expect to be in a better position to gauge how the economy is impacting RFID adoption and spending at the end of the year. In our opinion, it often takes three to six months for any economic impact to be felt. Many of the vendors and users we have asked about a potential slowdown indicate no real change in RFID projects as yet." The research report provides data on RFID revenues and unit shipments, segmented by technology, application and vertical market (aerospace/defense, automotive, commercial services, diverse manufacturing, government, health care/life sciences, retail consumer packaged goods, retail in store and transportation/logistics).

RF Code Unveils RFID Solution for Monitoring Data Center Environment

[RF Code](#), an active RFID hardware and systems provider based in Austin, Texas, has announced the availability of an active RFID sensor tag for monitoring the environmental conditions of data centers. The R155 humidity-temperature sensor is designed to provide real-time information regarding the temperature and humidity in the vicinity of servers and other IT assets. The wireless sensors, according to RF Code, can replace traditional monitoring systems that rely on wired devices. The new sensor, based on RF Code's patented 433 MHz active RFID technology, monitors and reports the relative humidity and ambient temperature in its immediate environment, as well as its unique ID, to any of RF Code's active RFID fixed and mobile interrogators. The information is then transmitted to the company's Zone Manager software, which uses algorithms that analyze each tag's signal strength to determine location. The battery life for the R155 tag typically exceeds 3.5 years, beaming its signal every 10 seconds. It features a low-battery alert, and will continue to monitor humidity and temperature for at least three months following this alerting. After that period, the tag will continue broadcasting its unique ID and a low battery indication with each beacon, though it will no longer report temperature and humidity.

French Retailer Launches NFC Payment Trial

Intermarche, a French retailer with almost 1,500 supermarkets, has announced its participation in a near-field communications (NFC) payment trial that lets shoppers pay with their mobile phones. The company is installing contactless readers from Hypercom at two of its stores in Caen and Strasbourg. The deployment is part of a trial launched in November 2007 by six major banks and four mobile phone operators in France, united in the Association Européenne Payez Mobile. That trial began with Motorola and Sagem Télécommunications handsets with built-in MicroRead NFC chips and SIM cards provided by Gemalto and Oberthur Card Systems. The Payez Mobile trial, which consists of 500 participants and 200 retailers, has spawned additional NFC trials leveraging mobile phones—for instance, the GSM Association, a group composed of more than 700 GSM mobile phone operators worldwide, has launched an NFC mobile phone pilot known as Pay-Buy-Mobile in France, Taiwan and Turkey (see Cell Phone Service Providers Start Global NFC Initiative). Intermarche is utilizing Hypercom's Wymix contactless PIN pad, which incorporates a chip-card/magnetic-stripe reader designed to be integrated with cash register systems at the point of sale.

California Residential/Retail Park Implements RFID-enabled Parking System

The Americana at Brands, a \$400 million mixed-use urban development featuring luxury retail and housing in downtown Glendale, Calif., is employing an RFID-enabled parking system that helps manage entry to restricted parking lots for its residents. Systems integrator Sentry Control Systems installed 15 RFID readers that operate at the 2.45 GHz band from TagMaster North America, a provider of automatic vehicle identification (AVI), transportation and logistics systems headquartered in Tacoma, Wash. The installation includes TagMaster's semi-active tags, which utilize a proprietary transmission protocol to communicate with interrogators up to 10 meters (32 feet) away. It also incorporates access management and ticketing solutions from Austrian-based Skidata. According to TagMaster, the RFID-enabled parking system will help Americana prevent non-permitted vehicles from entering restricted residential parking areas.

CSL's EPC Gen 2 Handheld Reader Available in North America

RFID technology provider Convergence Systems Ltd. (CSL) has announced that its CS101 UHF Gen 2 RFID handheld interrogator—which the company says can perform as well as a fixed reader—is now available in North America. The CS101 uses the Microsoft Win CE 5.0 Professional operating system, CSL reports, and offers a read range exceeding 25 feet, with standard dipole tags and a throughput reaching 400 tags per second. Manufactured at CSL's facilities in Hong Kong, the device is priced at \$1,950 and \$2,500 (including main accessories), depending on volume. A plug-in GSM/GPS module that provides global connectivity and real-time positioning will be offered in the coming months, the company adds. CSL has expanded its network of North American partners, which now include AssetPulse, Bentonville International Group, KeyTone Technologies, Queralt, RFID Global Solution, RFIdeaWorks, Ship2Save and SimplyRFID.

Omni-ID's UHF Tethered Tag for Small Assets

Tag maker Omni-ID has added a new tagging solution designed to let companies affix tags to small assets, or those for which space is at a premium, such as blade servers, cables and routers in a data center. The OmniTether consists of the Omni-ID Prox tag, which has a small hole in it through which a cable tie can be inserted to attach the tag to an asset. The Prox tag is a metal-mount tag that complies with the EPC Gen 2 standard and measures 35 millimeters by 10 millimeters by 4 millimeters (1.4 inches by 0.4 inch by 0.2 inch)—about the size of a stick of gum. Despite improvements in RFID technology, there is a subset of assets that still prove challenging to tag, given the space constraints. After listening to its customers' needs, Omni-ID developed a method for modifying its award-winning Omni-ID Prox product, while still maintaining the quality and readability its customers demand. According to a company spokesman, with OmniTether, Omni-ID was able to essentially drill a hole in the Prox tag without affecting either the IC or the tag's readability. Omni-ID indicates the OmniTether is best suited for high-value IT assets and other specialized assets, but could also be utilized for any asset for which space is limited.

Sirit and Mikoh Partner on Passive RFID Vehicle Identification System

Canadian RFID tag and reader manufacturer Sirit has announced that it has entered into an exclusive

partnership with Mikoh, an Australian provider of tamper-proof seals and other security solutions. Sirit indicates it will include Mikoh's Smart&Secure tamper-indication technology in its automatic vehicle identification (AVI) offerings. Sirit's technology either shuts down an RFID tag or sends an alert if that tag has been tampered with or damaged. In the first case, if a person were to attempt to remove or tear the tag, its antenna would be damaged and its connection to the RFID chip would be broken. In the second scenario, a release coating—a layer within the tag construction—allows the RFID chip and antenna to continue functioning. A single bit in the data represents the tag's status, and once that bit has been changed from its original "untampered" status to "tampered" status, it cannot be changed back. When an RFID interrogator reads a tag in a damaged sensor, the tag transmits that tampered status, indicating it has been damaged. The deal between Sirit and Mikoh is a three-year, exclusive agreement, with two additional three-year options, that licenses Sirit exclusively to promote and sell Mikoh's patented Smart&Secure technology worldwide in its passive AVI systems where physically secure vehicle tags are required. In return, MIKOH is paid a sliding-scale royalty based on volume.

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