

NFC Forum unveils N-Mark for tags; TagStone, Identec Solutions team to offer RFID systems to Middle East companies; LA Metro switches to more secure Mifare Plus chips; Belgacom, Alcatel-Lucent work together on contactless platform; FleetMind, Alien Technology partner on RFID for automated service products; Melexis announces new sensor tag IC for cold-chain applications.

June 4, 2009—The following are news announcements made during the past week.

NFC Forum Unveils N-Mark for Tags

The [NFC Forum](#), an association promoting the adoption of Near Field Communication (NFC) technology, has announced what it calls the N-Mark, a stylized letter N designed to help consumers locate embedded NFC tags, such as those used on smart posters, food packaging or medicines. The N-Mark indicates the spot at which an NFC device can read an NFC tag to establish a connection. NFC tag, RFID tag and label manufacturers can use the N-Mark once they sign a license agreement (at no cost); by doing so, the companies agree that their NFC tags and labels conform to the NFC Forum's specifications and guidelines, posted on [the N-Mark section of the Forum's Web site](#). All tags and labels displaying an N-Mark must be readable by NFC-enabled devices implementing the NFC Forum's Types 1-4 Tag Operation Specifications, and all applications must be compliant with the NFC Data Exchange Format (NDEF) Technical Specification. To further support tag usage and deployment, the NFC Forum has created Record Type Definition (RTD) technical specifications for applications that include text, Uniform Resource Identifier (URI), and/or smart poster record types; these specifications are available for download, free of charge, [here](#). Organizations may also create their own RTDs for other record types, as long as they conform to the RTD structure defined by the NFC RTD specification. The N-Mark is the first step toward the NFC Forum's forthcoming compliance program, in which companies offering NFC products can test their wares for interoperability and put them through certification tests. Work on the compliance program has been underway for more than two years, involving hundreds of representatives from 30 NFC Forum member companies, said Dino Bekis, cochair of the NFC Forum Compliance Committee and director of new business initiatives for [Broadcom](#), during a webcast announcing the N-Mark. The Compliance Committee is defining interoperability levels and certification programs, and also creating tools and test procedures, and expects to have the programs ready within a year. According to Bekis, the committee will also unveil a certification mark, to be displayed on devices, indicating they have passed certification testing.

TagStone, Identec Solutions Team to Offer RFID Systems to Middle East Companies

[TagStone](#), an RFID consultancy based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and [Identec Solutions](#), a Dallas, Texas-based provider of wireless tracking and tracing solutions, have partnered to offer customized RFID solutions for companies in the oil and gas industry, particularly those operating in the [Gulf Cooperation Council](#) (GCC) countries. The GCC is a trade bloc involving the six Arab states of the Persian Gulf (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE). The two firms have already been working on several projects within this Middle East market segment, particularly in areas of asset management and people safety, among others. TagStone and its alliance partners will be present at the region's first [RFID Journal LIVE! Middle East](#) event, to be held on June 15-17, 2009, at the

InterContinental Hotel Festival City in Dubai.

LA Metro Switches to More Secure Mifare Plus Chips

The [Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority](#) (LA Metro) has announced it is using [NXP Semiconductors'](#) Mifare Plus contactless technology for its automatic fare-collection infrastructure. LA Metro, which has already been utilizing a Mifare Classic-based system, is upgrading its Transit Access Pass (TAP) card to include Mifare Plus microcontroller smart card ICs, which offer more advanced chip security features, including 128-bit Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) cryptology, as well as other enhancements. "Security is a key element of our system, and NXP's Mifare Plus has proven to meet all our demands related to security features and superior scalability," said Jane Matsumoto, LA Metro's deputy executive officer, in a prepared statement. "With Mifare Plus, LA Metro is implementing a transport ticketing system that provides outstanding convenience to our passengers, while also anticipating system security requirements for the future." The transit authority receives approximately 480 million passengers annually in the greater Los Angeles area.

Belgacom, Alcatel-Lucent Work Together on Contactless Platform

Belgium telecommunications service provider [Belgacom](#) and [Alcatel-Lucent](#) are teaming up to create an open model to encourage the development of new applications for contactless cards and mobile payment technology. The two organizations have defined a platform that combines Belgacom's PingPing payment system for mobile phones and Alcatel-Lucent's [touchatag](#) RFID tags—which comply with Near Field Communication (NFC) standards—and contactless services, such as interactive advertising, loyalty programs and coupon services. By the fall of this year, Belgian consumers will be able to use a single contactless card or sticker to initiate a variety of applications, as opposed to numerous cards currently required. Both parties will also support NFC phones. Belgacom and Alcatel-Lucent will work together to create an accreditation program enabling other technology suppliers, operators and developers to create new applications and uses for the technology. Belgacom "wants to open up this technology to the creative power of many developers," said Stijn Vander Plaetse, the company's VP of innovation, in a prepared statement, "and we have adopted a very open approach to the market, and our cooperative agreement with touchatag is a logical extension of that approach." [Accor Services](#), a Belgian company that provides meal vouchers and other employee benefits, is trialing the PingPing payment system in combination with touchatag contactless technology, according to the two companies.

FleetMind, Alien Technology Partner on RFID for Automated Service Products

[FleetMind Solutions](#), a provider of fleet-management technology solutions, has announced its integration of [Alien Technology's](#) EPC Gen 2 RFID technology into its automated service verification solutions for waste and recycling firms. According to FleetMind, the RFID technology will help companies track waste and recycling services by ensuring and verifying that service was provided, and by identifying waste and recycling carts that have been moved or lost. Moreover, waste and recycling companies can extend the visibility to their customers, such as municipalities that provide residential service, in order to ensure and verify service. FleetMind will unveil its new, RFID-enabled suite of waste- and recycling-specific solutions at the [Waste Expo](#), to be held on June 9-11, in Las Vegas.

Melexis Announces New Sensor Tag IC for Cold-Chain Applications

[Melexis](#), a manufacturer of mixed-signal semiconductors, sensor ICs and programmable sensor IC systems, has announced a new sensor tag IC. The MLX90129 is a contactless sensing system on a chip, designed for such applications as cold-chain management, industrial data logging or medical monitoring devices. The tag IC contains an internal temperature sensor to monitor environmental parameters from -40 to +85 degrees Celsius (-40 to 185 degrees Fahrenheit), and includes 3.2 kilobits of memory and an RFID tag compliant with the ISO 15693 standard. The MLX90129 also includes an SPI port that can be used to connect external memory or a microcontroller, as well as an internal state machine so it can operate as a standalone IC. Design samples of the MLX90129 are available now, and an evaluation board and development kit are slated to be available in August and October 2009, respectively, with volume production expected to commence in November. Estimated pricing for the tag IC will be €1 (\$1.42) each for a quantity of 50,000.