

# EpcSTARS Comes Out in Bentonville

Tyco, Rafsec, ThingMagic and GlobeRanger unveiled a new alliance called epcSTARS at a recent meeting close to Wal-Mart's Arkansas headquarters.

Nov. 11, 2003—[Tyco Fire and Security's](#) RFID development and [ADT Security Services](#) units have teamed up with three other companies to offer potential customers a turnkey solution.

The three companies are Finnish RFID label maker [Rafsec](#), reader design company [ThingMagic](#) and middleware provider [GlobeRanger](#). The companies announced their plans at a gathering of Wal-Mart's top suppliers, held earlier this month near the retailer's headquarters in Bentonville, Ark., to inform suppliers what would be required of them come January 2005, when Wal-Mart wants to begin tracking cases and pallets using RFID (see [Wal-Mart Lays Out RFID Roadmap](#)).

Spearheaded by Tyco, the new alliance has been dubbed epcSTARS. The companies say the STARS acronym stands for service, tags, antennas, readers and software and represents the group's combined ability to provide end-to-end RFID solutions. The "epc" part of the name refers to the Electronic Product Code, the primary RFID technology the group is focusing on. The alliance is open and could add new members over time.

"Each of the companies had a compelling technology solution that could rapidly accelerate our time to market," says George Reynolds, VP of RFID for Tyco, based in Boca Raton, Fla.

Tyco, through its acquisition of Sensormatic, a supplier of electronic article surveillance (EAS) systems, has an experienced team of technicians able to install RF systems globally. The company has been working to develop RFID technologies and capabilities to complement its Sensormatic business. Tyco says the Sensormatic is the most widely used EAS system in the world, with more than 600,000 Sensormatic systems in place and around 4 billion tags sold each year.

Tyco already licenses RFID reader technology from ThingMagic, a Cambridge, Mass., startup, and sells it under its own SensorID label (see [Tyco Places Big Bet on RFID](#)). By working with Rafsec, Tyco is adding a partner who can deliver tens of thousands or millions of RFID labels to customers. Rafsec has invested heavily in production facilities in Finland, and it has developed an antenna design lab, where customers can get RFID tags custom designed for their products.

GlobeRanger provides software that lets Tyco connect its readers to a customer's back-end systems. Based in Richardson, Texas, the software vendor makes middleware that can filter data from RFID readers—a critical component of any RFID system. GlobeRanger's software is built on Microsoft's .NET platform, which makes it a good fit for Tyco because Sensormatic's software is also based on Microsoft technology.

Reynolds says the alliance is more than just a marketing arrangement. Tyco and Rafsec are working together to ensure interoperability between their products, and to optimize performance of tags for placement on specific goods. They are developing a certification process to determine the type of tag needed, the best place to place a tag on a certain item and the effectiveness of readers.

EpcSTARS is targeting large manufacturers that need to comply with Wal-Mart's requirement to put RFID

tags on shipments beginning in January 2005. It will also market to large retailers that make up Sensormatic's core customer base.

Although Tyco will bear epcSTARS's marketing costs, sales of the alliance's services will be a team effort by the member companies. To help educate customers about epcSTARS, Tyco is developing a Web site at [www.epcstars.com](http://www.epcstars.com). In the meantime, companies interested in learning more about the epcSTARS group can visit the [Sensormatic](#) Web site.

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