

# WhereNet Replenishes Parts

RFID supply chain solution provider introduces a system that tracks the quantity of automotive parts on the assembly line and reorders when stocks are low.

By Jennifer Maselli

Feb. 25, 2004—WhereNet has combined its RFID-enabled real-time locating system and wireless local area network (LAN) technology with sensors and software from Visible Inventory, a Salem, N.H.-provider of inventory-management technology, to create WhereSoft, an automated parts-replenishment system for the automotive industry.

Previous renditions of WhereNet's parts-replenishment products required human intervention to push a button. That alerted the system that specific materials and parts had been used. Now, by taking advantage of sensor technology from Visible Inventory, the system automatically senses when parts are taken from a storage container, alerts the system and triggers an order to an automotive parts supplier to replenish inventory as needed. In addition, the system can also be configured to alert factory workers to deliver more parts to a specified area.

The company offers 24 different product variations, depending on what type of container is holding parts or materials. The sensors, which are essentially electronic scales combined with an RF transmitter, can accommodate a range of containers, from 5- by 5-inch bins to 4- by 4-foot pallets, and can sense weight changes in containers holding 5 to 5,000 pounds of parts. Based on weight measurements, the sensors then calculate the quantity of parts remaining in a container or on a pallet. The sensors can detect changes in the quantity of parts within a 0.05% accuracy rating.

"If you have a 5,000-pound pallet and take out 10 parts, the system will be able to tell you that," explains Gary Latham, director of industry marketing for WhereNet, which is based in Santa Clara, Calif.

WhereSoft uses a new WhereNet tag, called WhereTag III Serial Telemetry. The battery-powered 2.4 GHz tag, which complies with the ANSI 371.1 standard for real-time locating systems, transmits spread-spectrum signals. Using spread-spectrum signals, the company says, results in a read range in excess of 300 meters.

The tag reads the sensor data and then transmits that data to a WhereNet's Wi-Fi wireless LAN transceiver. The transceiver forwards the data to a WhereNet database, which can pass on that data to other WhereNet applications, which can automatically place an order with an automotive parts supplier, or to third-party applications such as supply-chain management software.

WhereNet systems are installed in 70 large automotive factories worldwide, and Latham expects that most of those customers will integrate WhereSoft technology with their existing parts-replenishment systems. Latham says one customer is in the process of deploying the solution and expects to complete that deployment next month. The company declined to release the name of the customer.

WhereNet says the system can be deployed in 90 days or less. Price varies depending on implementation.

[RFID Journal Home](#)

Attend [RFID Journal Live! 2004](#)  
Executive Conference, Chicago, March 29 to 31  
It's Where RFID Is Happening  
[Register Today](#)

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved