

RFID News Roundup

NATO plans RFID pilot; Kennedy Group opens test facility; Impinj introduces long-range read-write chip; Plitek offers EPC-compliant RFID labels; new wireless RFID point-of-sale terminal.

NATO Plans RFID Pilot

Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization could soon follow the lead of the U.S. Department of Defense in using RFID to improve supply chain efficiency. At this week's Defense Logistics and Materiel Support 2004 conference in London, NATO announced that it will set up an RFID pilot to manage its supply chain between Europe and Afghanistan. The DOD has been talking to NATO members about creating a common RFID platform for several years. The United Kingdom's Ministry of Defense recently signed a contract to deploy RFID technology from Savi Technology, which has built the infrastructure for the DOD's In-Transit Visibility network. The NATO pilot will use the Savi's tags, readers and software as part of the core infrastructure. The pilot is expected to last 12-months and cover nine supply chain nodes in four countries. The value of the contract between NATO and Savi is more than \$1 million.

Kennedy Group Opens Test Facility

The Kennedy Group, a labeling company, has opened an RFID testing facility on the grounds of its 30-acre campus in Willoughby, Ohio. The 7,000-square-foot Customer Solution Center is set up to test RFID tags, printers and printer applicators under simulated working conditions to ensure that they meet the unique needs and demands of the company's expanding customer base. The aim is to help customers determine the tags, antenna types and frequencies needed to meet RFID tagging requirements.

Impinj Introduces Long-Range Read-Write Chip

Impinj, a fabless semiconductor company based in Seattle, unveiled what it claims is the longest-range read-write RFID tag. The company says tags using the Zuma chip—which is compliant with the UHF Class 0 Electronic Product Code specifications—can be read from 26 to 33 feet (eight to 10 meters), versus 15 to 20 feet for most UHF tags. The chip's read-write memory can also be locked for secure applications. And the chip has a "kill" feature that allows it to be rendered inoperable as a way of protecting consumer privacy. Impinj will be selling finished RFID labels using the Zuma chip. The labels available immediately for pilots and will go into commercial production in June. Impinj expects the labels to sell for less than 10 cents in large volumes.

Plitek Offers EPC-Compliant RFID Labels

Plitek, a Des Plaines, Ill.-based label converter and packaging company, has introduced RFID labels compliant with Class 0 and Class 1 Electronic Product Code specifications. The company did not disclose pricing. The company also said it would roll out Class 1 Gen 2 labels as soon as microchips based on the new specification become available. The first Class 1 Gen 2 chips are expected to hit the market in the fourth quarter of this year.

New Wireless RFID Point-of-Sale Terminal

ASK, a French manufacturer of contactless cards, tickets and RFID smart labels, has introduced a wireless point-of-sales RFID reader. The 13.56 MHz device is 9 inches (23 cm) by 3.7 inches (9.5 cm) by 3.6 inches (9.3 cm) and complies with ISO 7816 and ISO 14443 A/B smart card standards. It can be used to scan

contactless smart cards and transfer electronic funds or transit fares to and from smart cards. The unit is available with an integrated thermal printer for receipts. The company did not release pricing.

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