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DOD Soon to Reveal Its RFID Progress

The pace at which the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) is deploying radio frequency identification technology has not been the subject of as many articles as Wal-Mart's alleged "backing off." Still, there has been a general media perception that the department is not moving as quickly as it

had originally said it would.

News that the U.S. Air Force had purchased a large number of RFID label printers from Zebra Technologies (see USAF Cargo Movement Operation System Upgrades to RFID) was greeted by speculation that the DOD no longer required its suppliers to tag shipments and would begin doing so itself. (The DOD often needs to tag its own shipments, even if it receives some tagged goods from suppliers.)

The Department of Defense is a bit behind its original timetable for rolling out passive ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) RFID to track shipments, though its active tracking system is the most robust in the world. But as Alan Estevez, the organization's deputy undersecretary of defense for supply chain integration, has pointed out, the DOD is at war (see DOD Reaffirms Its RFID Goals). And despite its current focus on fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan and the insurgency in Iraq, the DOD claims it is making progress on its rollout.



The Department of Defense plans to update suppliers and the world at large regarding its efforts at the upcoming EPC Connection 2008, EPCglobal's fifth annual conference and exhibition, which *RFID Journal* is helping to produce. The DOD will host a special track, EPC in the Defense Industry, that will highlight some of the department's successful implementations. The track will also include a case study by a leading supplier that moved beyond mandates to achieve internal benefits, and the DOD and industry leaders will also answer attendees' questions.

The DOD has been making impressive strides of late. Premium members, in fact, can read a case study published in the November/December 2007 issue of our print magazine, entitled RFID Joins the Navy, which detailed the military's groundbreaking RFID deployment at the Naval Base Kitsap Bangor in Silverdale, Wash. This project will serve as a model not only for other Navy logistics facilities but also for companies looking to understand how RFID can drive process improvements.

There's no doubt the DOD is committed to employing EPC technologies to transform its supply chain. That's why Estevez, along with Kathy Smith (who works with Estevez) and Dave Dias, chief of the Asset Visibility Division within the U.S. Transportation Command (which handles logistics for all branches of the DOD), will take time out of their busy schedules to update suppliers and others within the EPC community on the DOD's progress.

Attendees at EPC Connection 2008 will learn a lot from the DOD and its partners. The event is unique in the RFID industry, because it focuses on a specific type of RFID—and because it's where end users swap best practices and learn from one another, and where those not yet utilizing the technology can discover how early adopters in various industries are currently achieving benefits.

Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal. If you would like to comment on this article, click on the link below. To read more of Mark's opinions, visit the RFID Journal Blog or click here.

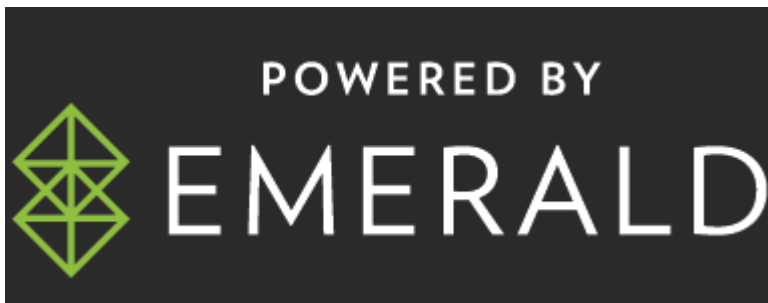


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