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RFID News Roundup

The following are news announcements made during the past week by the following organizations: Confidex; the European Pallet Association; SkyeTek; Laird Technologies; Barco; Audi; and Bibliotheca.

Confidex Ironside UHF RFID Tags Gain ATEX Certification

Confidex, has announced that its Ironside portfolio of

passive, ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) RFID tags are now certified for compliance with the ATEX 94/9/EC directive regarding the operation of equipment in areas containing potentially explosive atmospheres. According to Confidex, the ATEX certification means that the Ironside UHF tags—which are compliant with EPC Gen 2 standards already used worldwide in a variety of RFID applications, from tracking rail wagons to monitoring intermediate bulk containers—are now approved for the petrochemical, offshore and mining industries, or other industries in which the RFID system is continuously or occasionally exposed to potentially explosive atmospheres. The ATEX directive consists of various classifications based on the electrical device's protection type and its level of exposure to areas in which explosive materials exist, explains Confidex. The company reports that its Ironside, Ironside Slim and Ironside Micro tags have received the most stringent level of protection certification, signifying that they are suitable for use in areas categorized as Zone 0—in which an explosive gas mixture is present, either continuously or for long periods. This, according to Confidex, means that Ironside RFID tags are proven to be intrinsically safe and compliant for both surface industries and mining. In addition, the firm reports that its manufacturing and quality-management processes have been successfully audited for ATEX compliance, as well as for their conformance to the ISO 9001:2008 and 14000:2004 standards, for quality and environmental management, respectively. ATEX certification allows customers to use the Ironside tags for a variety of applications in hazardous environments, said Hanna Kosunen, Confidex's marketing director for object ID, in a prepared statement. "These include monitoring and validating equipment calibration data on-site by accessing the maintenance database through RFID tags, or tracking and managing a fleet of gas cylinders."

European Pallet Association Readies Final Design of EURO Pallets

The European Pallet Association (EPAL), the organization

overseeing the production, repair and inspection of more than 500 million so-called EURO pallets, is nearing the completion of various testing and pilots designed to determine the ideal design for RFID-enabled pallets. The RFID-enabled pallets—developed in conjunction with The Tag Factory, a company in New Dehli, India, that designs and manufactures RFID tags, and the Felix Schoeller Supply Chain Management Group, located in Germany—contain The Tag Factory transponders with embedded EPC Gen 2 inlays, each encoded with a Global Returnable Asset Identifier (GRAI) 96-bit Electronic Product Code (EPC) number. During testing, it was determined that the best design was to place the RFID transponders inside cutouts made on the pallet, so that the transponders would not protrude. “We renewed the position where the transponders are placed so they are more integrated into the pallet, so they won’t be damaged as pallets are stacked or pushed against each other,” says Frank Meyer-Niehoff, the Felix Schoeller Supply Chain Management Group’s director. It has also been determined that each pallet will have two transponders, one affixed on the long side of the pallet and the other attached on the short side. Testing also confirmed that the pallets’ structure has not been compromised by creating the cutout and inserting the transponders. “We tested the pallets with the small holes cut into them, and they are as stable as ever,” Meyer-Niehoff states. Each transponder is printed with a bar code and text, as well as the EPAL logo. According to Meyer-Niehoff, the RFID-enabled pallets are expected to be made commercially available sometime this summer. The pallets conform to a variety of requirements, including those outlined in GS1’s RTI Pallet Tagging guidelines. EPAL’s ultimate vision, the organization reports, is to utilize RFID to identify each of the 500 million pallets it has in circulation. The first EPAL RFID pallet initiatives launched in late 2008 (see EPAL Moves Ahead With RFID Pallet-Tagging Pilot).

SkyeTek M1-Mini RFID Reader Module Receives European CE Mark

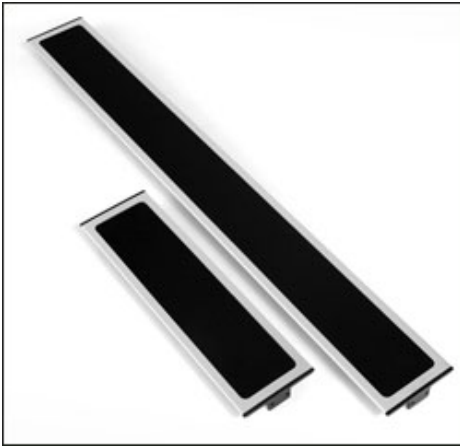
SkyeTek, a provider of RFID reader technology headquartered in

Denver, has announced that its M1-Mini high-frequency (HF) 13.56 MHz RFID reader module now carries the CE marking. CE, an abbreviation for the French words "Conformité Européenne," indicates that the reader has met the European Union's health, safety and environmental requirements, with the goal of ensuring safety. To obtain the certification, a manufacturer must put its products through a conformity-assessment process. To earn CE approval, SkyeTek reports, the M1-Mini had to pass the European Radio Equipment and Telecommunications Terminal Equipment (R&TTE) Directive, encompassing the EN 301 489 and EN 300 330 standards for HF 13.56 MHz RFID devices, and the low-voltage device directive encompassing the EN 60950 standard. Manufacturers selling products in the European Union must meet CE marking requirements, where applicable, in order to market their products in Europe. According to SkyeTek, the CE mark means the M1-Mini is now approved for sale in Europe, eliminating the need for any additional testing by users or integrators. Underwriters Laboratories (UL) completed testing for each standard, the company indicates, and affirms that the M1-Mini conforms to all necessary standards for CE certification. "CE approval for the M1-Mini will be a great help to both new and current customers," said Josh Peifer, SkyeTek's VP of business development at, in a prepared statement. "All products which include any type of radio must pass a variety of tests to be legally sold in the EU. By using the CE-marked M1-Mini, our customers can bypass those radio tests and save money and time-to-market for their final products." The M1-Mini can read and encode passive tags complying with the ISO15693, ISO14443A and ISO18000-3 standards. The module, which debuted in 2004 (see SkyeTek Shrinks the RFID Reader), is SkyeTek's best-selling RFID module, according to the company, and is embedded into many different types of devices, such as handheld analyzers, test equipment, medical caregiving devices, water analyzers and more. It has a one-inch diameter, making it one of smallest HF RFID modules on the market today, SkyeTek claims.

Laird Technologies Unveils Bluetooth Smart Application Powered by Thermal Energy

Laird Technologies has unveiled a Bluetooth Smart application module that combines Laird's Thermobility Wireless Power Generator with the BL600 Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) module, which the company launched in April 2013 (see RFID News Roundup: Laird Technologies Launches Low-Energy Bluetooth Smart Modules for Medical and Other Devices). The generator converts heat into direct-current (DC) power using Laird's eTEG embedded thin-film thermoelectric modules. The Thermobility system uses differences in temperature to enable power anywhere that there is an adequate heat source, and eliminates the need to utilize traditional wired power sources or replaceable batteries. The solution can provide years of maintenance-free operation, according to Laird Technologies, thereby expanding the possibilities for new wireless BLE-based sensor and security applications in industrial control, transportation, automotive and building management. Bluetooth Smart (BLE) technology is comparable to classic Bluetooth, but is intended to provide considerably reduced power consumption and lower costs. Laird's BL600 module is designed to provide engineers with the ability to integrate renewable energy sources into their own BLE-based remote sensor applications. "By storing energy and providing on-demand power for years, the use of energy harvesting can reduce the total cost of ownership by eliminating the prohibitive cost of battery replacement in remote sensor applications," said Bob Collins, Laird's VP of business development, in a prepared statement.

Barco Intros Line of Passive UHF RFID Antennas for a Variety of Applications



Barco's FlexiRay SFR 2.X antennas

Barco, a European IT solutions provider serving as an automatic-identification, bar-code and RFID systems integrator, has introduced a line of passive, ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) RFID antennas featuring circular polarization and a modular, ultra-slim design that, the company claims, make them suitable for creating RFID reading zones indoors and outdoors at entrances, exits, corridors, doors and gates. According to the company, the FlexiRay SFR 2.X antenna's thickness is only 2 millimeters (0.08 inch) without the connector, making it suitable for smart shelves, RFID racks, cabinets, smart displays, kiosks and embedded RFID UHF applications, as well as for applications in light logistics and industrial environments, manufacturing, reading on conveyors and production lines. The antennas can be attached to any surface, Barco reports, including metal. They are available for Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) UHF RFID bands, and are capable of reading distances ranging from 4 meters to 7 meters (13 feet to 23 feet), depending on the type of antenna, reader and tags, the cable length, and the environment. The FlexiRay SFR 2.X is supplied in various lengths, the company reports, ranging from 585 to 1090 millimeters (23 inches to 43 inches), making it easy to adapt the antenna to the specific installation. The antennas are equipped with an N-type connector for flexible cable connection.

Audi Puts Wireless Payment Capability in Cars for Parking-Garage Trial

Audi has announced an initiative to test an RFID-enabled wireless-payment system that lets drivers easily pay for parking from their car. The initiative is part of Audi Connect, a set of Web-based services that the car maker has been developing with the goal of creating a network between the vehicle, driver and computing infrastructure, so that drivers can access things like Google search technology, Sirius Traffic data, real-time news, weather data and fuel prices. The trial for the wireless-payment service will be conducted in Ingolstadt, Germany, Audi reports, and will ultimately involve up to 13,000 cars. During the trial phase, which will begin during the next few months, the cars will communicate with parking facilities operated by the Ingolstadt Economic Development Agency (IFG Ingolstadt) via RFID. IFG Ingolstadt operates nine parking lots and underground parking garages throughout the city, with a total of 6,200 spaces and 21 entrances and exits. Each participating car will have an RFID tag mounted on the inside of its windshield, and the driver will register for the service once via an online portal. Each trial participant will receive a monthly bill from IFG detailing any parking charges incurred, and the amount will be debited from that user's account by means of a direct debit mandate. According to Mark Dahncke, the senior manager of product and motorsports communications at Audi of America Inc., the RFID technology to be used is a proprietary system of tags and antennas provided by Scheidt & Bachmann, a global supplier of parking solutions. All Audi employees who lease a new car during the coming months are able to participate at the start of the trial. When the car is handed over, the participant will receive the Audi Connect wireless-payment starter kit, including the RFID tag. The trial will run through 2013, Dahncke says, and all parking lot users in Ingolstadt will be able to use the wireless-payment system by year's end. The goal of the trial, he notes, "is to integrate wireless payment as an Audi Connect service in the car in the

future, along the lines of the customer-friendly navigation service with Google Earth and Google Street View that is already available now. The success of the system depends on customer acceptance and content providers. Depending on the results of the trial and negotiations with possible content providers, a future integration can be envisioned.”

Bibliotheca to Provide RFID Services for all Libraries Across Northern Ireland

Bibliotheca, a developer and supplier of technologies designed to enhance library efficiency and the user experience, has announced that it has been chosen to provide the RFID tags, hardware and software for Libraries NI, Northern Ireland’s single public library service. Under the contract, Bibliotheca will introduce RFID technology into the 99 public libraries managed by Libraries NI. The solution will employ passive high-frequency (HF) RFID tags and systems operating at 13.56 MHz and complying with the ISO 15693 standard. All of the libraries within Libraries NI will incorporate a selection of Bibliotheca equipment, including RFID security gates. At 20 of the largest libraries, Bibliotheca will install its smartserve 400 self-service kiosks with integrated payment stations. These will provide patrons with the option of paying for library services using a number of payment methods, including chip-and-PIN, which the company claims can increase self-service rates and speed up the self-service process, thereby providing the library staff with more time to work directly with customers and manage events. The first stage of implementing the RFID technology begins this month, and will involve teams consisting of Libraries NI employees trained by Bibliotheca and outsourced staff, to begin tagging the entire collection of more than 1.8 million library items. Following the completion of this task, Bibliotheca plans to begin installing the security gates, in August, with the installation of the self-service terminals set to commence shortly thereafter. The RFID initiative is part of a larger, five-year contract won by Fujitsu to manage the service’s

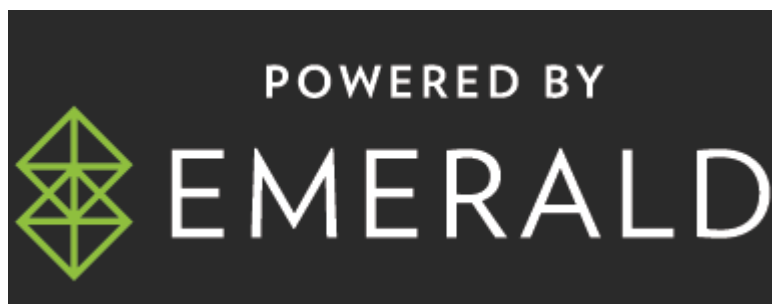
information and communications technologies infrastructure. According to Bibliotheca, the contract is aimed at transforming the library experience for the Northern Ireland public, by offering new and improved amenities—such as, faster IT speeds, Wi-Fi access and self-service facilities—as well as introducing greater efficiency in back-end staff operations.



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