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RFID News Roundup

The following are news announcements made during the week of Oct. 8.

Confidex Announces Another Metal-Mount Tag

RFID hardware provider Confidex has unveiled its latest RFID

tag: the Halo, a long-life, reusable passive UHF EPC Gene 2 tag designed for use on or near metal objects such as shelving or reusable containers. According to Confidex, the tag can be read from up to 4 meters away when mounted on metal. Measuring 14 mm by 60 mm by 11.7 mm, the tag is small enough to be employed for tracking IT assets such as servers or routers. It can be mounted via glue or zip ties and is manufactured using temperature-resistant plastic that the company says meets IP68 protection standards. While the Halo currently utilizes a Impinj Monza chip with 96 bits of memory, Confidex says it is developing a version offering additional memory capacity. A number of end users are presently testing or using the Halo tag. These include Rewe, a German retailer that is using RFID interrogators mounted on forklifts to determine the locations of consumer goods being stored in its distribution centers (see Anticipating ROI, Rewe Expands Its RFID Deployment). A Halo tag is attached to a storage bay and encoded with an identifier that references the location. The interrogator reads this identifier, and back-end software associates it with the goods being stored so the merchandise can later be located easily.

Syscan to Acquire Alternatives Technologies Pharma

Montreal-based active RFID systems provider Syscan International has announced that it is acquiring Alternatives Technologies Pharma (ATP), a privately-held Quebec-based provider of cold-chain management solutions for the pharmaceutical, life sciences, health-care and transportation markets. The two firms signed an agreement on Sept. 27, stipulating that Syscan will acquire all issued and outstanding common ATP shares, subject to regulatory and shareholder approval. ATP provides cold-chain solutions and services employing a number of technologies, including RFID systems supplied by Syscan. ATP's unaudited numbers for the recent fiscal year ending July 31 show revenues of \$1.4

million, while its current sales orders, booked for fiscal 2008, show more than \$2.5 million in orders. The merged company will operate as Syscan International. In May, Syscan acquired the Austin Group, a collective consisting of FastCards, an online issuer of RFID-enabled photo ID cards; RFID systems provider Sunshine Technologies; and ID-DNA, a bio-security company that is integrating RFID with its forensics services. The combined revenues of these companies for fiscal 2006 totaled approximately C\$1.3 million.

William Frick & Co Introduces Tags for Pipes

William Frick & Co. a Libertyville, Ill., firm that manufactures SmartMark RFID tags encased in molded plastic, as well as traditional custom synthetic and paper RFID label solutions, says it has expanded its SmartMark offering to include tags specifically designed for gas and water pipes. The tags—which the company says carry UHF EPC Gen 2 inlays that can be read from 15 feet away, and can hold more than 200 characters of text in usable memory—are designed to help ease the identification of pipes in such scenarios as safety inspections and repairs. The tags have an estimated lifespan of up to 10 years and are attached to pipes through an integrated rubber loop or via zip ties. Vulcanized rubber surrounding the tag creates a barrier that fights RF interference from metal pipes and keeps the tags readable in extreme weather conditions.

ID&Traceback Interrogator Approved for European Sheep and Goats

ID&Traceback Systems, a Norwegian firm that supplies RFID identification tags and readers for livestock tracking, has developed a handheld RFID reader integrating a wand antenna and handheld computer into a single unit. The interrogator

supports the ISO 11784 and 11785 standards for 134.2 kHz passive transponders. According to ID&Traceback, other mobile livestock tag-reading solutions use antennas with a separate handheld computer. Having the two components integrated, the company explains, makes using the reader easier. Known as the HHR 3000 Pro, the handheld supports a variety of antenna sizes and shapes. It has been approved by the European Commission's Joint Research Center for use in tracking sheep and goats, and also by the Canadian Cattle Identification Association. The reader comes with a basic application program, which can be altered through the use of a programmer's kit provided by ID&Traceback Systems. The handheld computer includes a USB-interface and can also support Bluetooth.

Research Study Says Passive RFID May Make Inroads in E-Seal Market

Tracking and securing cargo containers using RFID-based electronic seals (e-seals) has largely been the domain of active RFID technology. But a new study by market and research firm ABI Research suggests that could change. Available now, "Cargo Container Tracking and Security" examines the issues and technologies regarding cargo container security systems. Specifically, the study indicates the market is still underdeveloped, and that the absence of a mandate from the U.S. government requiring e-seal use opens the door for passive RFID tags. According to the report, passive RFID technology vendors have begun working with standards bodies to formulate a standard for less expensive passive RFID technology that could be employed for container tracking. The current e-seal standard, ISO 18185, focuses on active RFID tags and specifies the requirements for data protection, device authentication, environmental characteristics (resistance to vibration, mechanical shock, rain, dust and electrostatic discharge) and the communications (air-interface) protocol between read-only active RFID e-seals and

associated interrogators. All compliant e-seals must be capable of communicating at 433 MHz and 2.45 GHz.



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