

OSD's Estevez Pleased with DDC's Progress with RFID

During a September visit to the Defense Distribution Center (DDC), Alan Estevez, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Supply Chain Integration), toured the Eastern Distribution Center (EDC) for a first-hand look at DDC's use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Technology.

As he toured the EDC, Estevez was impressed with DDC's proactive approach to using RFID to improve asset visibility and inventory accuracy as well as DDC's ability to custom design RFID systems to meet customers' capabilities. Estevez said he was interested in pursuing a Department of Defense standard for RFID tags based on a DDC design to improve universal RFID recognition.



During the tour of the EDC, Estevez received a demonstration of the new passive RFID mobile workstation. From left to right: Andy Leitzel, Deputy Commander of Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, PA (DDSP); Larry Loacono of DDC's Information Technology division; Alan Estevez, ADUSD (Supply Chain Integration); Laurie Hallman of DDSP; Kathy Smith of the Office of the Secretary of Defense; Gene Bransfield of DLA's Logistics Operations Division; and Phyllis Campbell, SES, DDC Deputy Commander.

DDC Steps Closer to Full Implementation of Passive RFID

By Jessica Walter-Groft, DDC Command Affairs

In July, the Defense Distribution Center's (DDC) largest strategic distribution platform, Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, PA (DDSP), began a pilot program to test the effectiveness of using passive radio frequency identification (RFID) tags to enhance asset visibility and management, taking DDC one step closer to full implementation of passive RFID at both strategic distribution platforms by the beginning of 2005.

A small microchip imbedded in an antenna and enclosed within a thin label, the passive RFID tags will be applied to shipments as they leave DDSP on their way to pilot program partners Norfolk Container Freight Station or Camp Lejeune. A DDSP employee will scan the 2-D barcode on the shipping label, sending the information to a centralized server. The workstation's computer will then print out an RFID label to be placed on the package along side the military shipping label. When the items arrive at the Norfolk Container Freight Station or Camp Lejeune, the passive RFID tag will be read and used to access information about the shipment on the server.



The RFID label will be applied to the packaging along side the military shipping label, enabling the contents to be tracked throughout the supply chain.

"The benefits of RFID are tremendous—not only for the Warfighter in the ability to

track supplies, but also for DDC in allowing us to improve data accuracy," said Phyllis Campbell, SES, DDC Deputy Commander.

This testing of passive RFID is not the first for DDC. DDSP has been assisting in passive RFID tag research at the Mechanicsburg, PA detachment for many years by providing pallets of materiel and fork lift support to Oakridge National Laboratories, the DLA research and development firm for RFID. In addition, DDC's west coast strategic distribution platform, Defense Distribution Depot San Joaquin, CA (DDJC), was part of a successful passive RFID pilot project that simulated the tracking of combat rations through 11 points along the supply chain earlier this year. Also, this spring, DDJC validated tag placement for effective readability on vendor shipments of Individual Protective Equipment from DDJC to Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky.

These passive RFID pilots are being conducted in preparation of a January 1, 2005, deadline issued by the Department of Defense (DoD) that requests suppliers to begin applying passive RFID tags their shipments at the unit pack and pallet levels by that date.

DoD has also issued other policies relating to RFID technology. In January of 2003, DoD sent out an edict that all pallets and seawans destined for U.S. Central Command have an active RFID tag attached. Unlike the passive tags that are activated only when they pass by a reader, the battery-powered active RFID tags emit a constant signal that can be detected by a receiver from a distance.

The use of active RFID has aided significantly in the improvement of asset visibility throughout the logistics pipeline and has subsequently assisted in building customer confidence. This enhanced visibility has allowed the Warfighter to track his supplies throughout the supply chain, giving him the opportunity to know what is coming and when to expect it so that he can mobilize his resources accordingly.

Although passive RFID technology will be used to enhance asset visibility, its main