

## **3M Track and Trace Technology Emerging as a Major Source of Innovation in Industry, Government and Health Services**

Track and Trace Technology, utilizing Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), has become one of the latest technologies designated as a primary source of growth opportunities for 3M.

Lem Amen, vice president of Business Development for 3M Track and Trace Solutions, said the technology "offers a sophisticated and reliable way to keep track of assets that move around or are hidden from view." As an example, Amen cites 3M's recent announcement that it was chosen by the U.S. Army to develop a Track and Trace system to manage the medical records of 150,000 service personnel and their dependents at the nation's largest domestic armed forces installation - Fort Hood in Texas.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Tax Court, and local courts and district attorney offices around the country are using 3M RFID to efficiently track and retrieve case files.

"These are only two of "a multitude of uses for RFID that 3M has under development at this time," Amen noted.

The company is implementing a broad range of applications as diverse as protecting the integrity of prescription drugs while they are in the supply chain, locating and optimizing cathodes in mining processes, and tracking aircraft parts and tools through the workflow process.

Although most of the publicity for RFID so far has been in the realm of tracking product inventory for the retail world, "Track and Trace Technology will be making a big impact in many industries before the decade is over," Amen said.

For example, 3M's Track and Trace RFID system for Fort Hood is expected to make a positive impact on operational efficiencies in health care delivery, the troop deployment process and the management of medical records by substantially reducing errors and inefficiencies associated with manual tracking, retrieval, filing and file merging methods. It provides continuous automatic inventory monitoring and automatic error notification, and greatly simplifies and automates human compliance issues.

In mining, 3M Track and Trace Technology locates underperforming cathode equipment and identifies failures in mineral extracting processes in copper mines located in Chile that can help reduce energy and improve productivity.

3M has been a pioneer in RFID systems, which use microchips and tiny antennae that are attached to an object or, in some cases, embedded in an object. In some respects, RFID tags perform the same functions as barcodes. A major difference, however, is that an RFID tag transmits its information to a tracking device using radio waves and, therefore, no line of sight is required between the tag and the tracker.

In 2002, 3M added RFID technology to its Dynatel brand marker balls for locating all types of underground utilities. These electronic markers are color-coded by utility and are placed in the ground to track cable or pipes, and to pinpoint objects of special interest such as intersections or valves. An antennae floats in a liquid inside each ball and is activated by a locator carried by a technician when looking for underground facilities.

More recently, the company developed specialized RFID systems for tracking the physical case files that are vital to the operation of law practices, financial services firms, government agencies and providers of medical

services.

"We're in the early stage of a breakout period in which Track and Trace Technology will evolve as one of the most practical and ubiquitous solutions for industry and government," said Amen. "It will be an exciting development in which 3M anticipates playing a leadership role."

For more information call 1-800-3M-HELPS.

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