News Briefs

Center Of Excellence Formed

Marconi InfoChain, an asset management solutions provider, announced a collaboration with leading consumer goods and technology firms to found a Center of Excellence. This forum will explore and develop opportunities for the application of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology within consumer goods supply chains.

Joining with InfoChain are RedPrairie, Intermec, Georgia-Pacific, Unilever, Kimberly-Clark and CHEP. The strategic partnership of complementary technologies will promote research and analyze the results of major pilot projects designed to test optimum application of RFID functionality and benefits within the supply chain.

"We are looking at how RFID can streamline collaborative planning, forecasting and replenishment [CPFR]," said Paul Witt, Marconi InfoChain vice president of business development. "The Center of Excellence will help drive this process to establish a benchmark in productivity."

Currently, the center is working with scientists at the MIT Auto-ID Center to validate the use of RFID tags for inventory visibility and tracking. Testing involves distribution centers that support Sam's Club and Wal-Mart stores. With RFID, information can be updated with encoded microchips, often 40 times faster than with bar code-based systems. Data, gathered from RFID tags applied to pallets at distribution centers and read at stores, can boost supply chain capabilities by helping to get product to the shelf.

USPS Cites Cost-Savings Through Material Handling

A senior postal official detailed the success of new "intelligent" flat mail sorting equipment that deciphers hard-to-read addresses while sorting three times as fast as previous equipment. The system, known as the Automated Flat Sorting Machine 100 (AFSM 100 from Siemens Dematic), will save the Postal Service $292.5 million this year.

In making his presentation during the Board of Governors monthly meeting, Walter O'Tormey, manager, processing operations, reported that the two-year nationwide deployment of 534 AFSM 100s that began in April 2000, and placed equipment in 239 mail processing facilities, has been completed.

"One of the Postal Service's long-term goals is to move flats processing — traditionally one of the most labor intensive — from a manual and mechanized environment to one that is automated," he explained. "The Automated Flat Sorting Machine 100's innovative design offers several features not previously available, including automatic feeders, a tray take-away conveyor with adaptability to robotic handling, and on-line video encoding for processing non-readable flat mail images."

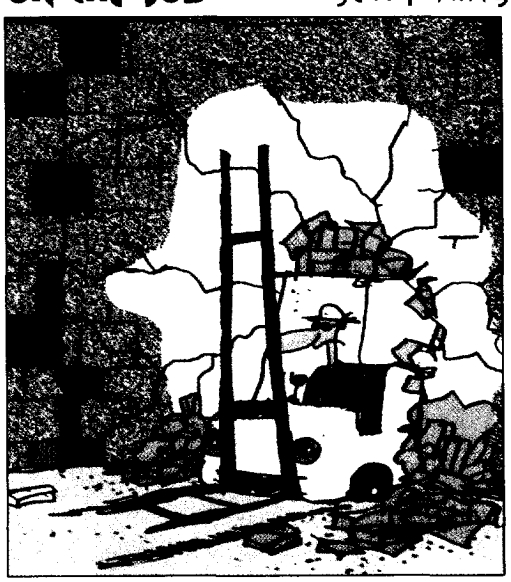
Ford Leads with Emissions-Certified Industrial Engines

Ford Motor Company has received emissions certificates for all fuels in its two most popular industrial engines. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has certified that Ford's 2.5-liter and 4.2-liter engines meet emissions standards for all fuels (gasoline, liquid propane gas and natural gas), operating under 4,000 rpm. The certifications also apply to engines equipped with the new Ford Engine Performance Module (EPM).

"We are the only manufacturer to be certified on all fuels for the broad industrial market to date," said John Andreas, director, programs and engineering, for Ford Power Products. "This shows that engines from Ford Power Products meet the most up-to-date and stringent emissions standards in the industry."

The new certifications apply to 2002 model year production. These engines, as well as the new Ford EPM, are now available from Ford Power Products distributors. Primary markets for these engine packages include airline ground support equipment, sweepers and mobile generator sets.

on the job jerry king



Sidney has to work on his reverse logistics