

Guidelines on EPC for Consumer Products

Introduction

Electronic Product Code™ (EPC) is an emerging system that uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) for the automatic identification of consumer products. RFID is now being used in everything from automobiles to security pass cards, and it serves a variety of purposes. One of its widespread uses is in devices such as EZ Pass in the US and Liber-T in France that speed the passage of autos through highway toll booths.

Benefits

EPC has the potential to be used on many everyday consumer products as they move through the supply chain – from factories through distribution centres and into retail stores. As EPC evolves, it promises to offer significant benefits to consumers and companies. The improved information in the supply chain will help speed products to the shelf and insure they are available when consumers want and in the quantities they need. Removal of expired products will be easier, and prompt removal of any recalled product will be facilitated. In addition, checkout times for customers could be significantly shortened.

Privacy

To allow EPC to realise its potential for consumers, retailers and suppliers, it is important to address privacy concerns prompted by the current state of the technology while establishing principles for dealing with its evolution and implementation. Accordingly, the sponsors of EPC have adopted the following Guidelines for use by all companies engaged in the large-scale deployment of EPC. These Guidelines are intended to complement compliance with the substantive and comprehensive body of national and international legislation and regulation that deals with consumer protection, consumer privacy and related issues. They are based, and will continue to be based, on industry responsibility, providing accurate information to consumers and ensuring consumer choice.

Evolution

As new developments in EPC and its deployment occur, these Guidelines will evolve while continuing to represent the fundamental commitments of industry to consumers. It is hoped that further developments, including advances in technology, new applications and enhanced post-purchase benefits, will provide even more choices to both consumers and companies on the use of EPC tags. The sponsors of EPCglobal support continuing their focused efforts in these development areas to assure responsible and effective development of both the EPC technology and these Guidelines.

Administration

These Guidelines will be administered by EPCglobal Inc.™, a joint venture between GS1 (formerly EAN International) and GS1 US™ (formerly the Uniform Code Council, Inc.®). GS 1 also sets and maintains standards for the product code now used on consumer products. EPCglobal also will be responsible for updating these Guidelines. For EPC to gain broad acceptance, consumers must have confidence in its value, benefits and the integrity of its use. EPC participants are committed to gaining and retaining this public confidence. EPCglobal will monitor the proper use of these Guidelines and be responsible for updating them.

Because EPC is an emerging technology in an early development stage, usage Guidelines supplementing or modifying those below will evolve as applications are developed and implemented. For example, if developments in the technology or its use provide consumers added flexibility in controlling EPC tags or record personal consumer information beyond that provided by conventional bar code technology, changes to notices required to consumers or to the Guidelines themselves may be appropriate.

EPCglobal Guidelines on EPC for Consumer Products

The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide a responsible basis for the use of Electronic Product Code™ (EPC) technology for consumer items. Under the auspices of EPCglobal Inc, these Guidelines have been followed since January 1, 2005 and will continue to evolve as advances in EPC and its applications are made and consumer research is conducted. As EPC evolves, so too will new issues. EPC participants are committed to addressing these issues and engaging in a dialogue about them with interested parties.

1. Consumer Notice

Consumers will be given clear notice of the presence of EPC on products or their packaging and will be informed of the use of EPC technology. This notice will be given through the use of an EPC logo or identifier on the products or packaging.

2. Consumer Choice

Consumers will be informed of the choices that are available to discard or remove or in the future disable EPC tags from the products they acquire. It is anticipated that for most products, the EPC tags would be part of disposable packaging or would be otherwise discardable. EPCglobal, among other supporters of the technology, is committed to finding additional efficient, cost effective and reliable alternatives to further enable customer choice.

3. Consumer Education

Consumers will have the opportunity easily to obtain accurate information about EPC and its applications, as well as information about advances in the technology. Companies using EPC tags at the consumer level will cooperate in appropriate ways to familiarise consumers with the EPC logo and to help consumers understand the technology and its benefits. EPCglobal would also act as a forum for both companies and consumers to learn of and address any uses of EPC technology in a manner inconsistent with these Guidelines.

4. Record Use, Retention and Security

The Electronic Product Code does not contain, collect or store any personally identifiable information. As with conventional barcode technology, data which is associated with EPC will be collected, used, maintained, stored and protected by the EPCglobal member companies in compliance with applicable laws. Companies will publish, in compliance with all applicable laws, information on their policies regarding the retention, use and protection of any personally identifiable information associated with EPC use.