



Blackinton SmartShield™ Badge

by Kevin Gordon

Not that many years ago, a lost or stolen badge or police ID, while certainly a concern, was mostly an inconvenience. In today's world, reports of missing public safety IDs, badges, uniforms, and other credentials aren't put on the back burner. Instead, they take precedent for fear of what the items could be used for.

And when one considers how many badges and patches are in the hands of non-police collectors, the potential for problems certainly surfaces. The days are over when we just assume the driver of the fire truck is actually a firefighter, the ambulance driver actually a paramedic, and the police officer is what the badge says he is.

With such concerns in mind, Blackinton, the largest manufacturer of badges and insignia in the United States, is moving to a new era with its new product, the SmartShield™ Badge Security System.

Blackinton, a leading provider of badges for law enforcement and other public safety agencies, will make this latest cutting edge technology available in early 2006. The SmartShield™ will be sold through Blackinton's already established traditional dealers.

The patented SmartShield™ system combines a traditional quality badge with advanced state of the art Enforcement Identification (Eid). The joining of these two results in a complete badge security solution not only for law enforcement, but also for any public safety agency that utilizes badges.

SmartShield™ looks like a traditional badge, but an embedded microchip on the reverse stores a unique identification code. This advanced technology allows the badge to be used for both badge and personnel verification, badge issuance, and inventory tracking as well as access control. An Eid Software-enabled radio frequency identification (RFID) reader activates the chip. It transmits SmartShield™ authorized encoding to both the reader and database.

Using state of the art, leading edge wireless technology, the SmartShield™ badge and system builds RFID security into every badge. Each SmartShield™ badge includes a RFID transponder. This transponder chip contains pre-programmed coding that relates to the information stored in the database of the agency.

The agency data base can contain info such as the badge ID, location (ie in inventory or issued) and even wearer information including name, photo, badge number, blood type, and medical history. This info is only available to authorized system users.

The system is presently being beta tested by several agencies including the South Carolina Highway Patrol. According to information provided by Blackinton, Captain James D. Connelly of the South Carolina Highway Patrol commented, "I know that this product will certainly increase security at our facilities as well as track our badges through inventory scanning once we have that in place."

While designed for the typical daily police environment, the SmartShield™ could be extremely effective during emergency response/disaster related events and special events for identifying first responder personnel in the field. The SmartShield™ badge system reads the badge's radio frequency ID chip and then displays the officer information such as name and photo, but displaying it on a local terminal screen. A badge that can tell us who should have it and what that person looks like is a viable tool.

The Eid Software that drives the badge and system is easy to use and allows simple control programming. It has a wide range of applications for security. As many agencies have existing RFID access-control security systems, Eid software is easily interfaced with them such as police agencies with

smartcard access control systems. Many of the hundreds of existing systems presently in use around the country are capable of using Blackinton's SmartShield™.

In May of 2005, federal officers in New York made an arrest for possession and sales of more than 1300 counterfeit badges. Included were shields from 35 varied federal, state, and local agencies. Recently, federal officers purchased more than 900 black market law enforcement badges. Some of these were real and some fake and they included federal agency badges including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Secret Service.

Chief Ziegler, the Blackinton director of marketing, explained, "Every SmartShield badge includes a rugged RFID transponder, similar to those used in many other industries. This transponder is a tamper-proof, embedded chip that stores individual encoding to validate the badge and even the wearer. Its use requires little or no training and it's based on and supported by commonly available hardware and software. It is the solution for law enforcement agencies that need badge control and enhanced security."

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This article was printed in Law and Order Magazine, January 2006.