



Unlocking RFID to Track Machining Tools

For all your RFID and metal asset identification needs contact **idtracon** the authorised agent for Metalcraft in the Australasian Region.

Universal RFID Asset Tag enables manufacturer's tool crib tracking

Problem:

Applied Engineering in Yankton, South Dakota specialises in high speed milling of aluminium components to close tolerances. Like most modern machine shops, they use automation and technology in the effort to produce high quality products at the lowest achievable cost. Even robotic systems are used to deliver speed and consistency at lower cost.

As part the effort to maintain a competitive edge, Applied Engineering wanted to improve the management of their machining tools. These tools, stored in an assortment of trays, were kept in a central locker, but there was no inventory or record of what was being used by whom and the lack of control was creating significant expense.

Solution:

The manufacturer added AutoCrib's IntelliPort RFID gateway to their tool crib, expecting automated tool tracking from the RFID Reader, multiple RF Antennas and a passive Gen 2 RFID tag associated with each tool. They immediately discovered the challenge of tuning RFID systems to read each tag in an environment filled with metal, plastic and other types of items to be tracked.

"The RFID reader alone wouldn't do it," said project leader Brad Bohnet. "The 'on metal' tags for our metal dies weren't working and neither were the tags we placed on the plastic tool trays themselves."

After months of trial and error, Brad Bohnet found data showing Iowa based Metalcraft's ability to get consistent, surface agnostic read range with their **Universal RFID Tag**. Conversations with Metalcraft and a rigorous test confirmed the performance of these tags that a read range of over 4 metres (15 feet) from a patent pending design that avoids metal interference and delivers accurate reads every time. The durable label is just 2 mm (0.085 inch) thick, which helped Brad Bohnet's requirement for a small tag associated with each tray location.

Result:

Reliable reads from the RFID tags realise the promise of the system by enabling time and money to be saved. Applied Engineering has eliminated the time spent hunting for tools; the system manages availability, even generating purchase orders when inventory is low. And the company has saved about \$250,000 year over year by not having to buy replacements for lost tooling.

Call **0490 039 278** or visit **www.idtracon.com.au** for more information on **idtracon** bar code asset tags and their customers solutions.



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