



VOLKSWAGEN AG Information Service

ILR[®] Brings Visibility to Container Flow

Wolfsburg/Brussels/Mosel – They contain a battery, a small transmitter, a memory chip, and are not much larger than a cigar... From now on, these so-called active tags are expected to prevent specialized containers from going astray. As part of a large-scale test to see this happen, **10,000 containers** for stamped parts for the new VW Golf were recently equipped with these tags. "We are looking to **create visibility of the container flow** in the plants and **between the plants, to optimize availability of the containers**, and consequently to save on operating costs", says Pierre Pommer of Wolfsburg Plant Logistics.



Inconspicuous but effective: Tag attached to container.
Photo: MultimediaCentrum/Niepaul

Participating in this large-scale test are the Wolfsburg, Brussels and Mosel plants. **Data collection terminals** are also required to read and identify the signals sent by the tags. "We have installed these terminals at critical points in the container logistics chain, as for example in the stamping plant, at the entrances to the halls, or where the empty containers are stored," says Christoph Pelich, administrator of the VW "VisuM" software. By means of wireless communication, the system registers when containers move from one location to another. "That way we maintain **continuous inventory of all containers.**"

Data collection terminals, also known as Gate Readers, are used at the Brussels and Mosel locations as well. "This allows us to do an online inquiry into container inventory at those plants at any time via the Intranet", states Marc Wenzel of Wolfsburg Plant Logistics.

Beyond RFID.

Indirectly, the system tracks container flow between the plants as well, as it records the exact date and time at which a container leaves one plant and arrives at the other. Mobile gate readers are also used; these are installed on forklifts.

Application of tags at Volkswagen is nothing new: there are already 14,000 tags and 40 gate readers in use for vehicle delivery at the Autostadt. The tags are also used in the vehicle finishing center—administered by the "VisuM" software as well.

To these three container logistics experts, the advantages of the tag system are obvious: the system enables **advanced planning** for optimal use of stamping equipment; **costs** incurred through equipment down-time, back-up packaging, and extra trips due to missing containers **are reduced**; because fewer expensive specialized containers go missing, fewer replacements need to be purchased. This also leads to **savings on effort and expense.**

"Additionally, each tag's memory could be used for a paperless movement of goods some time in the future", says Wenzel. Operating costs are minor compared to positioning systems via satellite or cellular networks: a tag costs less than 50 Euros. A certainty for Pelich, Pommer and Wenzel is that "if the large-scale test meets our expectations, we plan to apply the system to all the specialized containers in the plants".

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