

RFID might help track first responders

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A National Institute of Standards and Technology team is studying the feasibility of using radio frequency identification technology during emergencies.

RFID is widely used to identify, track and communicate information about items, products and even animals. The NIST team is deciding whether the technology can be used as a low cost, reliable means to track firefighters and other first responders in buildings and help them navigate under hazardous conditions.

Typical RFID systems consist of tags, tag readers and application software. As the tagged products pass by a fixed reader they transmit data about the product and its location.

The NIST researchers want to know whether RFID tags placed inside buildings can help pinpoint the location of a first responder and provide local information to a small handheld device that includes an RFID reader and a navigation unit.

The researchers are also evaluating whether inertial sensors such as accelerometers and gyroscopes can be used to help guide first responder through a building.

The NIST research team reported on the project earlier this month during the eighth annual International Symposium on Advanced Radio Technologies in Boulder, Colo.

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