

COMPANY PROFILE

Pioneer in Microscopic Marker Celebrates a Decade of Success

It is some ten years ago that 3S Simons Security Systems launched SECUTAG® - a microscopic colour-coded particle that is economical, simple to identify yet provides unequivocal evidence of product authenticity in courts. The company has recently rebranded itself and the product range, extended the use of Secutags into the logistics market and is poised for a major drive for international sales. Authentication News spoke to Sales Manager Angelina Rayak to find out more about this technology, one of the first of its kind, its enduring success and how its benefits compare with similar technologies on the market.

3S Simons Security Systems was founded as Simons Druck & Vertrieb GmbH in 1984 by security print specialist Rolf Simons to produce security documents and labels. During the 1990s, the search began for a unique anti-counterfeiting technology in response to growing market demand. After several years of development, SECUTAG was the result. Reflecting the importance of this to the company's portfolio, and its changing role as a supplier of product security technologies and not just secure printing services, the company changed its name to the current moniker in 2008.

World's Smallest

Secutags are described by the company as the world's smallest colour-coded particles.

They consist of melamine alkyl polymer particles – from 8-90 microns in size – which are made up of a sandwich of 4-11 colour-coated layers. The colours and the order of these are what differentiate them and more than 4.35 billion different permutations are possible. In addition to normal colours, the Secutags can also be delivered with high or low fluorescent and magnetic coatings, or a combination of these. Customers are provided with their own individual code or codes, which are detectable with simple microscopes (at x 100 magnification) or special readers. The presence of just five particles is all that is needed for identification.

The tags are either applied by 3S onto the security labels or documents they print for customers, or are supplied as a very fine powder which the customers can disperse in varnishes, inks, adhesives, polyester threads and apply via coating, varnishing, spraying or printing. The Secutags do not affect the appearance or performance of these different media, and can be used in

all conventional printing processes (other than those using inkjet inks).

For product marking, meanwhile, 3S has adopted a special dispenser technology that can be retro-fitted to customers' production lines so that products or packaging can be marked inline. The technology comprises both the dispenser and a varnish containing the Secutags, which are applied as a



small dot to the products at the end of the production line.

Key Benefits

A key benefit of the Secutags, regardless of their method of application, is that they are extremely economical, with only a low density of particles required for identification and a very small area of the document or product needing to be marked. Another key benefit is that the codes can be read with ordinary magnifiers, and do not require special, and potentially costly, reading devices.

Moreover, whereas other forensic technologies require laboratory analysis to provide evidence that will stand up in a court



of law, Secutags do not. The analysis by magnification provides sufficient evidence that the product is genuine (if present) or fake (if not). Again, this is a major benefit as it removes a time-consuming, expensive and, in most cases destructive, process.

Other benefits cited by the company are the durability of the particles (which have thermal resistance up to 200°C, and for a short time even up to 350°C, and which are also resistant to attack by organic solvents and chemicals), the flexibility of application and integration, multiplicity of different codes and, last but not least, their security – patented, available from one single source only, proving unforgeable to date and offering indisputable

authentication.

New Sector Brands

Last year, in recognition of the growing demand for covert marking technologies in a variety of markets, 3S not only changed its name but developed a series of different brands for different market sectors.

One is Secuart, aimed at the fine arts market. The technology can be used by museums and auction houses to mark and validate genuine pieces of art without these being disfigured in any way. Similarly, artists and galleries are using the technology to secure their work and expertise.

Others include Secufashion (for the sportswear and apparel industries), Secuproduct for on-product marking, Secupack for packaging, Secudoc for document protection and Secudata. The last is a relatively recent development, and is aimed at the logistics industry. It comprises a special seal or label secured with Secutag, onto which the customer prints this own traceability code – eg a datamatrix.

Continued on page 6

Pioneer in Markers... cont'd

Whereas such codes can be copied, says the company, the accompanying Secutags cannot.

Major Customers

Given that the technology is covert, the company does not – as a rule – name customers. An exception is sports good manufacturer Puma, which has been using the technology for a decade, making it one of the earliest adopters. All its products – sportswear, shoes etc - are marked with a care label accompanied by an additional label featuring the Secutag. This is used to identify genuine from fake products not only by Puma, but also inspectors and customs officials.

Another customer, this time for Secudoc, is Stuttgart Media University, which uses the technology to mark certificates.

And another is EPAL – the European Pallet Association – which operates a pool and exchange system for pallets and box

pallets, and certifies the quality of these for security and safety reasons. With counterfeit pallets presenting significant safety risks to the personnel handling them, and the goods they are transporting, in 2007 EPAL introduced new security sales incorporating Secutags.

Most recently, the company has announced that the testing equipment manufacturer Ingun is using Secutag-encoded seals to provide legally-binding protection for its test probes. These are used to examine circuit boards, and the plastic boxes in which the probes are packed and distributed now feature a Secutag-secured closure seal.

3S is a family-owned and run company, now headed by Dirk Simon, son of Rolf, company founder and inventor of *SECUTAG*®. It is based in Nottuln, near Münster, in Germany and has some ten direct employees, supported by a worldwide network of distributors.

Network for Growth

It sees this network as key to its growth in the international market. Most contracts to date have been with German companies but, as Angelina Rayak points out, although its major customer Puma is headquartered in Germany, its sports products are manufactured (and marked) all over the world. Hence 3S' business development strategy, which is to leverage this network to access other markets, using distributors that it certifies as Secutag sellers.

Key markets are in automotive components, pharmaceuticals and, building on its success with sportswear, fashion and apparel. Not to mention, with its latest move into logistics, track and trace through combining its technology with printed serialisation for a gold-plated secure supply solution.

Contact: www.secutag.com