

FOOD & DRUG PACKAGING

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PRODUCTS IN ACTION

Supplement maker has anti-theft protection all wrapped up

Rexall Sundown successfully tests automatic insertion of first "pouched" electronic article surveillance (EAS) tags into bottles.

Rexall Sundown, a leading vitamin and supplement manufacturer, is first to implement new packaging technology that is proving to be a more effective way to safeguard its high-risk products from shoplifters.

The company is now inserting new Capsule Label electronic article surveillance tags from Sensormatic Electronics Corp. into bottles of dietary supplements and vitamins. The Capsule Label consists of a standard Ultra•Max anti-theft label that is overwrapped in film and supplied in a reel, ready for automatic insertion into bottles.

The Capsule Label has just been cleared by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for direct food contact. According to Bill Cornelisse, manager of package engineering at Rexall Sundown, a key part of the development of this concept was identifying the film used to wrap the source tags. "This film must provide a barrier between the product and the source tag to assure that there is no interaction between them," he says. "Further, the film had to meet all of the operating requirements to be manufactured and for insertion into our bottles. Without the film, this development may have not been economically feasible."

The Ultra•Max tags are wrapped by Outlook Group on a horizontal form-fill-seal machine to create the packet or "pouch." The film is a solventless laminated polyester/white opaque polyethylene structure and is reverse printed in one color.

In a nutshell

- Goal:** Deter theft of vitamins and supplements in stores
- How:** Insert pouches of EAS tags inside bottles
- Result:** Retailers applaud the increased level of security
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From Alpha to Beta to production

Theft of product from the store shelf has become one of the biggest problems for many of Rexall Sundown's retail customers. To help control the theft, the company has attached EAS source tags to the inside of many of the paperboard cans holding its bottles for several years.

Hiding the anti-theft tag inside the package makes it more difficult for shoplifters to determine which items



Wrapped source tags are inserted into 200cc bottles holding tablets of vitamins or dietary supplements. The bottle opening of just 1.25-inch proved to be no problem for accurate and reliable placement.

are protected against theft. Cornelisse explains, "We searched for ways to insert the source tags into bottles but were unsuccessful until Sensormatic developed the technology."

Rexall Sundown volunteered to be the Alpha test site for evaluating the technology and proving its feasibility. The Alpha testing began in October 2000 and lasted for about six weeks. Based on this successful testing, Rexall Sundown agreed to be the Beta test site. Cornelisse tells us, "We purchased the insertion machine that was developed for this concept and began the Beta test in March 2001. This test, too, was successful, and we are now inserting the EAS source tags into several products as part of normal production."

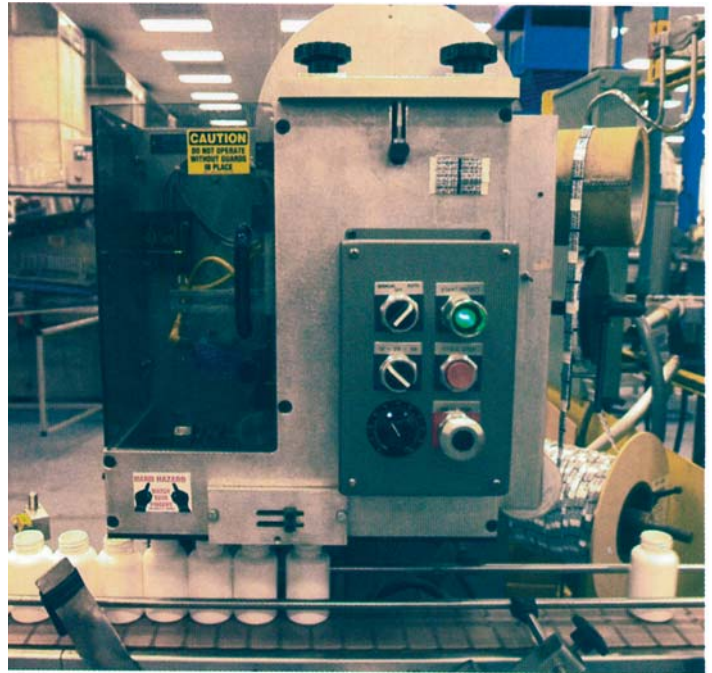
Small opening is no problem

The EAS tags arrive in bandolier format at Rexall Sundown already “live” or activated, ready for automatic insertion. Each reel holds 10,000 source tags.

Customized to handle Sensormatic’s new Capsule label, the new Model PPS-250U inserter from George Gordon Associates cuts and places the EAS tags at speeds up to 150 cycles per minute directly into containers with an opening of just 1.25 inch. (The equipment can actually cycle at 200 per minute and can also handle desiccants.)

Rexall Sundown is currently adding the new source tags into bottles containing tablets for just three products for now, but will probably expand to more products in the future. Although, the insertion equipment is capable, with change parts, of inserting the source tags into most of the company’s bottle sizes, at this time it’s only using it with 200cc bottles.

Cornelisse reports that retailers are enthusiastic about inserting source tags into bottles because it increases the level of security in the store which, in turn, lowers their shrinkage or theft.



With minimal disruption to production, Rexall Sundown rolled the source tag inserter up to its packaging line. Modified to handle the new wrapped packets which are supplied in reels, the unit automatically cuts and places the tags. Cutting is triggered by a simple eye-mark on the film.

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