

Theory of Operation

The Antenna is permanently attached to the EUT and is not readily replaced by the end user.

The card readers are composed of two major sections. There is the RF section operating at 125KHz and the Host Interface and Configuration section. This physical interface to the Host is via USB or RS232 connections.

RF Section

The frequency of operation depends on the type of card that is to be read but is fixed for any particular card reader. This is due to space constraints in providing a tuned antenna for any particular operating frequency band.

All of the card readers rely on a “back-scatter” modulation technique. The RF field produced by the reader is actually supplying power to the card that is being read. Once the card is powered from the RF field, data communication takes place by modulating the carrier in different ways particular to the card technology in use. The reader directly modulates the carrier when it is transmitting to the card and the card responds by “loading” its antenna circuit with the modulation data and thus reflecting this “detuning” into the reader antenna circuit. The “loaded” reader antenna circuit sees amplitude changes representing data these changes are processed to recover the response data from the card.

The RF section is powered from a switched 5V source that is under control of the Host Interface microprocessor. The power is switched off during startup and when the USB puts the Host Interface into a low power “standby” or “sleep” mode.

The RF section microprocessor communicates with the Host Interface section microprocessor via digital interface lines connecting the two.

Host Interface Section

This section receives data from the RF section that represents either a non-solicited card ID (usually over “Wiegand” format data lines) or is a more elaborate two-way asynchronous data exchange when commands must be issued to the RF section to get an appropriate response. This two-way data exchange is used to read from certain card types that stored user information. These cards are all in the 125KHz group.

The Host Interface microprocessor communicates to the Host (usually a PC or printer) directly thru a USB or RS-232 peripheral operating.

The Host Interface micro may be configured by the Host to control various behaviors (display LED and beeper), timing parameters, and card ID return format. The exchanged data may also include card data (read and write) and overhead commands to the RF micro that set up card data access such as key exchanges and card data location.