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How Secure Are Your Proximity Cards?

Over the past several months, a number of customers contacted me directly to express their thanks to Indala for providing a far more secure access control system than they had been using. In each case, I heard stories of unauthorized people accessing facilities even though they were never issued credentials by that organization or that integrator. But how can that be?

Actually, I am surprised it does not happen more often. A growing security risk has evolved with the explosion of proximity technology over the past five years—one which all security professionals should be aware of. I am talking about the proliferation of duplicated proximity card numbers resulting from unregulated 26-bit Wiegand-formatted cards. By some estimates, there are literally hundreds of thousands of duplicate proximity cards in circulation; and the odds of someone with a card from one system being incorrectly validated by another system increases every day.

So what can you do about it? Fortunately, several solutions are available to you and your customers.

One solution is to increase the bit format you order from your supplier, thus decreasing the chance of duplication. Many access control panels today will accept extended bit-length formats. And, if requested, most proximity cards manufacturers will program cards to various bit lengths. Indala specializes in creating and managing custom formats up to 172 bits.

Another method, unique to Indala, is the capability of a proximity reader to authenticate a card to a specific system *before* data is passed to the control panel. This is accomplished transparently by defining a 30-bit encryption key in front of the 26-bit (or other) Wiegand data. If the card and reader keys do not match, no data gets through the reader. We call this FlexSecur™ technology. The benefits to the integrator are as follows:

- With over one billion possible key combinations, every system administrator can be assured that no duplicate cards exist.
- The 30-bit key is independent of the access control system data, so the standard 26-bit Wiegand data can be truly secured as never before.
- Indala's production system automatically manages and tracks encryption keys and custom formats at no additional charge.
- It may be possible to upgrade "data pass-thru" readers to FlexSecur-enabled readers *on site*, quickly and easily—without additional equipment.

125 kHz proximity cards continue to account for the vast majority of access control solutions installed today. Indala makes it easy and cost effective to ensure your customers' proximity cards are as secure as they can be. That's a great way for you to increase customer loyalty and differentiate yourself from your competition.

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