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Mobil's Speedpass Makes Pumping Easier and Quicker with New Technology at the Gas Pump

(March 1997, Dallas, Texas)

If you think pumping gas is a no-brainer task, listen up. It just got even easier.

If you are a Mobil customer visiting one of three TETCO Mobil stations in north Austin, all you have to do is point a special key fob at one of Mobil's new gas pumps. The red Pegasus lights up, the pump turns on, and your gas purchase is automatically charged to your credit card.

With keys already in hand, fresh out of the ignition, using Mobil's Speedpass is blindingly faster than pulling out the credit card, swiping it, and waiting for acknowledgment.

Savvy Mobil Sets the Trend

"Once they find out about it, customers love it," says Mike Coleman, manager of TETCO Mobil on FM 1325. In just a few weeks, Speedpass will be available, free to customers in key markets. Customers in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Orlando, San Diego, Tampa, and Washington can use Speedpass beginning May 1.

Knowing that drivers want nothing better than to gas up and go, Mobil turned to an emerging technology—called radio frequency identification (RFID)—to anchor its new Mobil Speedpass system.

In a market notorious for lack of brand loyalty, Mobil is betting that 1 million customers will sign up for Speedpass by the end of 1997. As early as 1993, Mobil identified speed as the number one motivator for choosing a gas pump to fill 'er up. Customers are purely interested in the fastest way of pumping gas.

Already the leading gasoline seller (in gallons sold), Mobil pioneered pay-at-the-pump technology with credit cards. Now Mobil is betting that Speedpass will encourage drivers to go an extra mile to fill up at a Mobil pump, despite motorists' inclination to choose gas based on location.

Customers in Austin, where Speedpass was first developed and continues to be tested, as well as those in St. Louis, where Speedpass has been test-marketed for the last seven months, can also take advantage of Mobil's specialized pumps. Of the seven Mobil stations that

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San Antonio-based TETCO owns in Austin, three are retrofitted for Speedpass. These three are located at FM1325 near IH35, Palmer and IH35, and Jollyville Road near the Arboretum.

Austin Firms Join Forces to Develop Speedpass

Speedpass was developed locally by Wayne, a division of Dresser Industries, Inc., the Dallas based oil services firm, and Texas Instruments TIRIS. Wayne is the global leader in fuel dispensing and control systems for the retail petroleum industry. Both the dispenser modifications and the changes to credit card authorization software were developed at Wayne's headquarters in Round Rock. Next time you are fueling, take a look at the manufacturers tag on the dispenser. Most likely it's made by Wayne.

TIRIS (Texas Instruments Registration and Identification System) is an advanced RFID technology used to detect and track valuable objects and people. The ability to automatically capture accurate data and to read data in less than half a millisecond makes RFID technology a logistics champion. Among many varied applications, TIRIS RFID is used to time races, such as the 1996 Olympic Marathon and the Boston Marathon; to pay tolls automatically while maintaining highway speeds; and to automate manufacturing processes. Ford Motor and Toyota are using it in anti-theft devices.

Future Options

With technology, the future always holds promise and opportunity. Speedpass is no exception.

Already, future enhancements are being contemplated. Imagine driving up to the pump and being alerted that your car needs oil or a tune-up. RFID technology, unlike bar code and magnetic stripe cards, does not need a direct line of sight to conduct a proper read. A device can be attached inside your car to monitor any fluids, for example, so that when you drive up to the pump, it can scan for these devices and report to you on an LED panel the results of a diagnostics review.

How Does the Technology Work

Speedpass is a one-inch long electronic device that easily attaches to a key ring. This tag contains a transponder and a microchip that is encoded with a unique number identifying the user. An electronic system located in the pump includes an antenna that sends out a low frequency radio signal. This signal powers the key tag so that data stored in the tag can be sent back to the pump.

In milliseconds this electronic transaction recognizes the user and activates the pump.

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Simultaneously, the pump system contacts Mobil's centralized credit department to verify credit information and charge the customer's account with the amount of gas purchased.

Confidential information, such as the credit card number, remains outside this electronic communications system. To cap losses in case the device is stolen, Mobil is limiting usage to two tanks of gas per day.

How to Become a Speedpass Motorist

To become a Speedpass motorist, apply for the free Speedpass transponder and a Speedpass account, customers fill out a palm-sized application available at the Speedpass gas stations. It takes 30 days and a valid credit card to process new accounts. Lost transponders are easily canceled and replaced by calling a 1-800 number.

Then look for the specially marked Speedpass pumps. Finally, flash that transponder and pump gas!

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