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Technology News

Plessey samples electric potential sensor

October 11, 2011 | Peter Clarke | 222909556



Plessey Semiconductors Ltd. (Plymouth, England) is now able to sample an electric potential sensor that detects changes in electric field, in contact, at a distance, through clothing and even through walls. The sensor, in development at the University of Sussex for more than eight years, is applicable to numerous applications from consumer electronics in gesture recognition to non-intrusive medical applications.

It could be highly disruptive in the marketplace and is a key part of Plessey's rebuilding strategy. The first Electric Potential Integrated Circuit (EPIC) sensors are optimized for use as an ECG sensor and provide a resolution as good as or better than conventional electrodes and without the cost of replacement or contact gels.

The technology functions as an ultra-high input impedance sensor that acts as contactless digital voltmeter to measure tiny changes in the electric field down to a resolution of millivolts, the company said. The EPIC technology is so sensitive that it can detect changes at a distance and even through a solid wall.

This ease of detection even through clothes or at a distance means that new ways of taking ECG measurements are being investigated by customers. For example, the EPIC sensors could be built into stretchers for immediate monitoring of patients heart rate and respiratory action or built into clothing to monitor stress levels in emergency response personnel such as firemen.

"The first EPIC products are designed for ECG applications for health and patient monitoring as well as fitness and wellness applications," said Derek Rye, Plessey's marketing manager, in a statement.

"The next release products available later in this quarter will be optimized for movement sensing where applications range from security, to automotive, to safety through to gesture recognition applications. The gesture recognition capability has been picked up for controller-less gaming and the remote control of electronic consumer products like televisions, monitors and computers. We are working on end applications where the potential volumes are in millions per month. This is all very exciting for the company."

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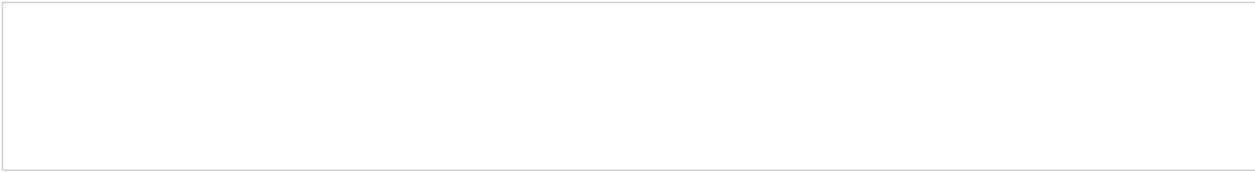
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