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Market Analysis for the Mobile Information Professional

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COMPANY FINDS NICHE IN RAIL MONITORING AND TRACKING

A Colorado company is using GPS and telemetry to make inroads in the railroad tracking market. Denver-based **Lat-Lon** is using **Aeris.net's** wireless data communication service to gather positioning and report data for a variety of railway and trucking applications, including hoppers, coil covers, boxcars, auto rack cars and trailer tracking.

"We were established to service the transportation industry...concentrating on rail and intermodal markets. Our unit is basically a self-contained box with no GPS antenna outside of the product," said John Felty, Lat-Lon national sales manager. "Our product also is solar powered, so users get a weatherproof box that can be attached to any asset."

Felty said that the unit has been tested in desert and extreme cold weather conditions. "Our first products were installed on open hopper gravel cars that went through shakers. We also have had units deployed during a hurricane in Florida," he said.

The basic GPS unit costs \$799. Customers include some of the big rail operators—**CSX**, **Union Pacific** and **CN**. Felty sees a number of market trends for rail tracking. "First, the price of these units have come down—that's driving a lot of growth. We see people not really interested in GPS tracking by itself, but are more interested in the data collected," he said. "This means getting a time and date stamp to an event that is happening to [the railcar]. Customers are using this information for security and quality control." The company's RailTough package consists of Lat-Lon's X-8 transmitter that is mounted on a railcar, trailer or shipping container and one or more remote sensors that communicate through a wired or wireless transmission back to the X-8.

Lat-Lon president Dave Baker says that the unit can be added on to for future applications. "Who knows what information will be of critical importance to people in the shipping industry one, two or even three years down the line?" he said. Some of the unit's capabilities include impact detection, tank car monitoring, and open door or hatch alarm monitoring. "The units can detect and transmit 10 different kinds of events on a railcar", Felty said.

Aeris.net's MicroBurst technology, which is embedded in Lat-Lon telemetry units, transmits the data over the unused channels of existing cellular networks to Lat-Lon's Web server. Recorded data is automatically sent to a customer's fleet management software or stored on-line at www.lat-lon.com--where users can access location histories, current fleet reports, and an interactive map with color-coded rail lines, towns and other features.

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John Felty has edit the original article to improve clarity

