

Production during the corona crisis: Oerlikon protects employees with innovative distance-warning technology

- To ensure safe and reliable operation in its plants, the Swiss technology group Oerlikon piloted the sensor-based technology SafeZone from the start-up Kinexon.
- Based on an industry 4.0 radio standard, the technology measures the distance between two sensors with centimeter precision.
- Tracing infection chains in compliance with data protection regulations: This system stores no personal data. In case of infection, the contact chain can be traced by comparing transponder data.
- After pilot applications in Switzerland and Germany: implementation planned within the global Oerlikon network.

Pfäffikon, Schwyz, Switzerland – June 12, 2020 – During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Swiss technology company Oerlikon is relying on an innovative technical solution to protect its employees from infections during operations. At Oerlikon's plants in Switzerland and Germany, the company has piloted the sensor-based technology SafeZone from Munich-based start-up Kinexon. Deployment is planned for the global Oerlikon network.

Following an initial promising pilot phase at the German sites of Oerlikon Balzers and Oerlikon Manmade Fibers, Oerlikon expanded the use of the SafeZone distance-warning technology from Munich-based start-up Kinexon in Switzerland at the Oerlikon Metco Site in Wohlen. After the successful pilot tests, the company plans to deploy the system across the global Oerlikon network. "As a company, our top priority is to offer our employees a safe working environment," explains Dr. Roland Fischer, CEO of the Oerlikon Group. "The corona pandemic is presenting us with new challenges that affect our work processes as much as our daily lives. With the transponders, we see a reliable, simple and safe solution to protect our employees in their working environment."

SafeZone is a technology that allows the distance between employees to be measured with centimeter accuracy. Employees wear a sensor either on their wrist or as a tag. If two sensors fall below the defined minimum distance of, for example, 1.5 meters for a certain period of time, a warning tone sounds. By wearing a SafeZone sensor, employees can dispense with face masks for activities that do not require close cooperation if they are not required by occupational safety law.

In the event of an infection, software enables contact chains to be tracked precisely. Thus, the affected employees can be informed quickly, and appropriate measures such as quarantine can be initiated for the contact persons. The advantage: in this way, operations can be maintained in unaffected units or teams. Compliance with data protection regulations is ensured by separating the data for the numbers of the sensors from the names of the sensor carriers. A small, predetermined group of people would be permitted to combine both data sets in order to trace the chain of infection only in situations where it is necessary.

"For us, the SafeZone system offers three major advantages," says CEO Dr. Roland Fischer. "First, we protect our employees; second, they can partially dispense with use of face masks during work, which increases both comfort and work safety; and finally, third, in the event of an infection, we can narrow down the affected units and do not have to shut down the entire operation. Consequently, we regard the

system as an investment in the future in order to be as well prepared as possible for the further, unpredictable course of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Additional Information

A video about the pilot project is available [here](#).

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About Oerlikon

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