New Advanced Format Technology Affects All Computing Systems that Use Disk Drives

SAN JOSE, Calif., /PRNewswire/ -- IDEMA (The International Disk Drive Equipment and Materials Association) today announced the launch of the "Are You Ready?" campaign, an effort to raise awareness in the computer industry about the advances and advantages of long data sectors.

IDEMA is the data-storage industry's trade association dedicated to driving technology standards that support the advancement of data storage. The campaign focuses on helping the computer industry prepare for the transition of hard disk drive (HDD) processing from the historical sector lengths of 512 to 520 byte increments, to increments of 4,096 bytes per sector using a technology referred to as Advanced Format. IDEMA is joined by major hard disk drive manufacturers in the launch and support of the "Are You Ready?" effort.

"Are You Ready?" is a comprehensive campaign providing the computing industry with awareness and tools to prepare for the upcoming transition to Advanced Format technology. This includes a Developer Kit program, educational materials, new Wikipedia entries, and a series of exhibits and events in six cities starting with the Microsoft Partner Conference in Washington D.C. (July 11-15).

It also includes a logo program to help customers recognize HDDs with Advanced Format capabilities. Advanced Format is used by hard disk drive manufacturers to support increased storage capacities while maintaining the integrity of the data stored on and processed by hard drives. The transition to 4,096 byte sectors, or 4K, affects all software and hardware components that interact with the HDD.

When properly optimized, Advanced Format delivers superior performance to the legacy format that has been in use since 1957; however some software applications and other operations that access the HDD can appear sluggish to users if the system has not been optimized to use Advanced Format. A key goal of the "Are You Ready?" campaign is to provide information and tools so that every part of the computing ecosystem can benefit from the capabilities of Advanced Format.

"IDEMA identified the need to move to long data sectors in 2000, and has since been working with the hard drive community to define the standards to support widespread adoption of the technology," stated Mark Geenen, Chairman of IDEMA. "Having achieved definition and initiation of the supporting standards earlier this year, the next logical step was for IDEMA and the HDD vendors to implement the technology. That is the objective of the 'Are You Ready?' campaign," he stated.

While some of the hard disk drive manufacturers have already begun shipping Advanced Format drives, all manufacturers plan to change the formatting of the data stored on the media to increments of 4K bytes per sector using Advanced

Format technology starting January 2011.

To easily identify HDDs using Advanced Format sectors, IDEMA has sponsored the "AF" logo program as part of the "Are You Ready?" campaign.

"The move to 4K byte sectors is vital for the HDD industry to continue increasing HDD capacities and achieve reliability and price points that customers expect," stated John Rydning, research director for hard disk drives at research firm, IDC. "The effort that IDEMA and the HDD OEMs are undertaking to launch the Advance Format campaign is important. It will help to educate both customers and end-users on the change to 4K byte sectors, and ensure a smooth transition to this technology."

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