

## Glacier moves back into the future with wearable computer

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Mark Mistretta, chief financial officer of Glacier Computer in New Milford, shows off one of the company's products, a tiny computer that you can wear on your wrist. (David Harple/Staff photo)

Technology caught up with Dick Tracy's Two-Way Wrist Radio over the past decade as cell phones shrank to the size of a gum pack.

Now it's taking a leap forward with the launch of Glacier Computer's Ridgeline W200, a 10-ounce computer that is worn around the wrist.

"To actually wear the computer is something people will be able to do for a long time," Chief Executive Officer Ron D'Ambrosio said.

The New Milford-based firm recently entered into an agreement with Eurotech, its Udine, Italy-based designer, to distribute the unit, which allows for Internet access and a keyboard on its 3.5-inch screen, D'Ambrosio said.

The W200 also comes with a GPS unit and voice recognition, and it has been customized to manage



warehouse inventory. Glacier is looking to expand its capabilities so the W200, which lists for \$3,000 and has a street price of about \$1,900, can be used in a variety of fields, he said.

"A captain of a large ship told us he'd like his entire crew to have this wearable for his Navionics software package," D'Ambrosio said, adding that a

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jet engine mechanic also has expressed interest. "They would be able to use it to determine the torque of the bolts."

Glacier Computer was founded in 2000 by D'Ambrosio along with John Geary, vice president of sales and marketing; Dan Poisson, director of engineering; and Don Berch, sales manager. D'Ambrosio works at the headquarters in New Milford with Mark Mistretta, the firm's chief financial officer for the past two years, and Mary Rose Mistretta, accounting supervisor and Mark's wife. The company's 20 other employees handle customer service, engineering and manufacturing at a 6,000-square-foot facility in Amherst, N.H.

The company, which makes an array of rugged computers designed for industrial use, is exploring the possibility of nurses using the W200 to keep medical records on hand while keeping their hands free. Glacier Computer also is developing the W250, a military version of the W200.

"The military is showing some interest," D'Ambrosio said.

Glacier Computer is working with Eurotech to distribute the W200 and its Eurotech counterpart, the Zypad, worldwide and develop them into applications for use by hunters, mountain climbers and hikers, Mistretta said.

And in shades of comic book Tracy, "Later models will have a phone," Mistretta said, adding that companies in Iran, Israel and Australia already are showing interest. "We think the wearable market space will expand into people's everyday lives as volume increases and the price point drops."

Other companies that offer a wearable computer include Motorola and LXE Inc.

The pros and cons of a wearable computer can vary depending on its intended use, said Matthew Nemerson, president of the Connecticut Technology Council in Hartford.

"The smallness can be an issue, and the reality is you still can't cross the street and edit a document at the same time," he said.

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