RFID Tracking Moves to a New Level of Creepiness

July 1, 2015 â€" A few years ago we told you about a school that had started using RFID chips in student badges to track the movement of children throughout the school day. Parents were in an uproar and the bad publicity was enough to force the school to drop the program. But times are changing and there are now several surveys that show a substantial portion of the population doesnâ€™t mind being tracked if they gain certain conveniences in the process. Now, an office complex in Sweden is using this changing mind-set to its advantage and is setting the bar for RFID use.

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There is a good chance that if you own a pet, youâ€™ve had it microchipped. But thatâ€™s largely because you canâ€™t bear thought of losing Fido. Not because you necessarily want to track his movements throughout the day. How would you feel about being microchipped yourself?

If you the thought of this makes you shudder, but you are able to calm yourself down with the knowledge that any such plans are years in the future, you may be shuddering again by the time your finish this paragraph. Thatâ€™s because a new hi-tech office complex in Sweden called Epicenter is now â€œofferingâ€• employees the chance to experience microchipping themselves.

Although no employees are currently forced to go through the process, they are encouraged to do so. In return, they get certain conveniences. Such as the ability to open office doors without a pass card or code. Or the ability to use office copiers without a code.

Personally, Iâ€™ve never found it too difficult to punch a few buttons to make my copies but what do I know. I still insist on driving a car that uses a real key too!

What is kind of frightening about this is that a surprisingly large portion of the population seems all too willing to give up their personal privacy for relatively little consideration. A recent study in Australia showed that roughly 25% of the population there would be willing to be microchipped if it meant that they could simply waive their hand in front of a sensor on a cash register to make payments. Thatâ€™s just so they donâ€™t have to reach into their back pocket or purse to take out a little cash or a card.

What makes the stats more surprising is that getting a microchip itself isnâ€™t exactly a pleasant process. The chip is shot into your hand using a special gun. Ouch.

It remains to be seen if this type of technology will ever take off in the United States but if it does, it will certainly place consumers at greater risk for identity theft.

Current passports and some credit cards already use RFID. Although advocates of the technology will tell you that the chip has to be within a few inches of a receiver in order to be read, there have been numerous demonstrations to the contrary. Thieves using hi-gain antennas have been able to read the data on chips from several feet away. That's one of the reasons that we advise our readers to use passport pouches or wallets that shield RFID chips they may have in their possession. That's going to be difficult if you have an RFID chip implanted in your hand. Of course, if the theif is unsophisticated, I suppose he could just cut your hand off too. I wonder how many of people being implanted have considered that?

byJim Malmberg

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