

SEARCH

The Web

CNN.com

Search

Powered by YAHOO! search

Home Page
World
U.S.
Weather
Business
Sports
Politics
Law
Technology
Science & Space
Health
Entertainment
Travel
Education
Special Reports

# TECHNOLOGY

CNN **HeadlineNews** **HOT WIRED** HEADLINE NEWS

## Chipping away at privacy with radio waves

By Christine Boese  
 CNN Headline News  
 Wednesday, April 21, 2004 Posted: 10:08 AM EDT (1408 GMT)

**(CNN) -- Privacy advocates are alarmed by a new technology that might be able to monitor even the tiniest aspects of our lives. It comes in the form of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips.**

Knowing what toothpaste you use might be worth millions to some company, and the people who are spending that much on research and development for these chips are betting that it is.

Do these chips really amount to a dangerous invasion of privacy, or are they a harmless monitoring of insignificant facts such as which razor blades we use?

### How do they work?

Most people haven't heard of RFID chips, which can be woven into clothing or stuck invisibly on toothpaste tubes.

These chips are small, inactive radio transmitters -- but they don't actually broadcast. They have one piece of information on them: a serial number.

When the RFID chip gets a certain radio signal, it perks up and sends its serial number back to the master radio, to be recorded in a database.

The RFID chips are more sophisticated than barcodes on products and have more potential uses. Currently, the range is short, so the radio that reads the RFID data needs to be nearby. Eventually that range will expand. A single radio in a store could monitor the entire inventory.

Some say consumers will eventually benefit from RFID, with personal readers to identify the freshest loaf of bread in the supermarket, for instance. If you have a chipped credit card, stores could automatically debit your account for whatever products you walk out the door with, eliminating checkout counters.

### Soon to be ubiquitous?

Does this mean one day some consumer product researcher could drive down your street, take a reading, and get data on all the products in your home, even the things you hide in the back of your closet?

Search Jobs MORE OPTIONS

Enter Keywords

Enter City  ALI

careerbuilder.com SEARCH

### Story Tools

- SAVE THIS
- E-MAIL THIS
- PRINT THIS
- MOST POPULAR

### RELATED

- E-mail Hot Wired
- RFID Journal
- RFID.org

### YOUR E-MAIL ALERTS

- HLN Hotwired
  - Technology (general)
  - RFID chips
  - Activate or **CREATE YOUR OWN**
- [Manage alerts](#) | [What is this?](#)

SERVICES

- Video
- E-mail Newsletters
- Your E-mail Alerts
- RSS
- CNNtoGO
- TV Commercials
- Contact Us

SEARCH

Web  CNN.com

Search Powered by YAHOO! search

That's what the privacy advocates fear. They want laws for the use of these chips, before they are woven into the fabric of our consumer society.

But regardless of protests, the chips are coming.

Wal-Mart has mandated that its 100 top suppliers incorporate the chips on cartons and pallets by January 2005.

The U.S. military is also going to RFID chips for its complex supply chain.

The chips could even be used in dental work to uniquely identify the various pieces of hardware in your mouth.

Anybody heard of getting radio transmissions through your fillings?

### Story Tools

-  [SAVE THIS](#)
-  [EMAIL THIS](#)
-  [PRINT THIS](#)
-  [MOST POPULAR](#)

advertisement

[Click Here to try 4 Free Trial Issues of Time!](#)



## TECHNOLOGY

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

[Blog-linked firings prompt calls for better policies](#)



- [Probe into possible sonar link to dolphin beaching](#)
- [High-tech hunters push ethical envelope](#)
- [CNN/Money: Stripper puts silicone implant on eBay](#)

## TOP STORIES

CNN.com HOME PAGE

[Journalist: 'Americans fired without motive'](#)



- [Lebanese, Syrians to discuss pullback](#)
- [Lawyers: BTK suspect says he's depressed](#)
- [Social Security battle heats up](#)

[International Edition](#)

Languages

[CNN TV](#)

[CNN International](#)

[Headline News](#)

[Transcripts](#)

[Advertise With Us](#)

[About Us](#)

SEARCH

[The Web](#)

[CNN.com](#)

Search

Powered by [YAHOO! search](#)

© 2005 Cable News Network LP, LLLP.  
A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.  
[Terms](#) under which this service is provided to you.  
[Read our privacy guidelines.](#) [Contact us.](#)



All external sites will open in a new browser. CNN.com does not endorse external sites.



Denotes premium content.



Add [RSS headlines](#).