RFID tagging could become a privacy nightmare

RFID tagging is already very common, but what privacy challenges will it create if it continues to grow in popularity?

By Asavin Wattanajantra, 24 Sep 2009 at 08:27



A security expert has revealed some of the privacy challenges that we could face in the future as **RFID tagging** becomes more common.

Dr. Ari Juels of RSA Labs, speaking at the **ENISA conference in Greece**, said that RFID tagging was becoming more ubiquitous and was already in heavy use, such as with the tagging of **mobile phones**, animals and even people.

Juels said that this could lead to a big **privacy** issue in the future as RFID tags could be attached to different parts of an individual that would allow them to be tracked and read.

He used a make-believe example of a 'Mr Jones' living in 2030, who had a replacement hip, a wig, a Communist party handbook, money and lingerie all on his person and all tagged with RFID chips.

"If every object in the world had an RFID tag, you could just imagine what information will turn up. Some of the information could be mildly embarrassing, such as reading or garment preferences," Juels said.

"Some of it could genuinely be dangerous. For example there is an indication [Mr Jones] has money on his person."

Juels also said there was an issue over tracking, as RFID tags emitted static serial numbers that could be thought of as licence plates, potentially allowing individuals to be tracked.

"For example, if Mr Jones attends a political rally you can imagine law enforcement scanning tags so that he could be rounded up later, if need be," added Juels.

"Or if Mr Jones wins some prestigious award he can be tracked by the media with the tags on his person."

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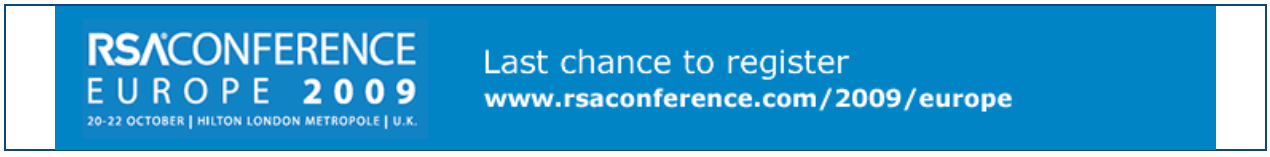
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