

This Company Is Bugging Me

Last week, Hanna Simpson's employer, Ventron United, sent out an identical memo and e-mail to all 50 employees. The memo/e-mail announced that all employees would be required to have a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip inserted into their left or right hand. The RFID would allow employees to open secure doors, use equipment, and log onto computers throughout the company's campus in Portland, Oregon.

The announcement explained that the company would be working on some projects that required high security. So, management wanted to ensure that only employees who were supposed to enter secure areas or use secure computers would have access. Also, the company experienced a break-in a couple months ago. The thieves took a few laptop computers, but the rumor was that the thieves were really looking for information on Ventron United's new products. They had used an employee's access card, which was reported missing the next day.

Hanna's two closest co-workers, Jim Peters and Georgia Miller, had very different reactions to the memo. Jim thought it was a great idea. He already had a personal RFID implanted in one of his hands. "It's about the size of a grain of rice. I don't notice it at all. But, now I don't need to carry keys anymore. It opens the doors to my house, and I can turn on my car with just a button. I'm looking forward to the day when I can pay for my groceries with the wave of my hand."

Georgia was less enthusiastic, even paranoid. She confided to Hanna, "I think they're just trying to track our movements around here. Besides, my body is my personal space. These RFIDs are an invasion of my privacy."

"But would you quit your job over this?" Hanna asked Georgia.

"I hope it doesn't come to that, but yes I would," Georgia replied. "I'm not some dog that needs a chip implanted in me to keep track of me."

Other employees were worried about the health implications of the chips. Some just felt uncomfortable about the idea of a chip being injected into their hands. Some were considering a lawsuit if the company didn't back down on the issue.

Do some research on the Internet about RFIDs. What ethical issues are in conflict here?

