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Cheap as chips, but how safe are they?

Thursday 16 March 2006

Scientists are questioning the safety of RFID systems, after infecting a chip with a virus to prove their vulnerability.

Researchers at Amsterdam's Free University say RFID chips are susceptible to computer viruses, despite their extremely low memory capacity.

An infected RFID tag can upset the database processing the information on the chip, the study by Melanie Rieback, Bruno Crispo and Andrew Tanenbaum reports.

"Everyone working on RFID technology has tacitly assumed that the mere act of scanning an RFID tag cannot modify back-end software and certainly not in a malicious way. Unfortunately, they are wrong," the scientists say in a paper.

"An RFID tag can be infected with a virus and this virus can infect the back-end database used by the RFID software. From there it can be easily spread to other RFID tags."

"This is intended as a wake-up call. We ask the RFID industry to design systems that are secure," Tanenbaum said in a telephone interview.

SOURCE: [Reuters](#).

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