

RFID AWARENESS

RFID poses serious risks to privacy and civil liberties.

Q. What is RFID?

A. Radio Frequency IDentification is an automatic data capture technology that uses tiny microchips and miniature antennas affixed to products. Known as "RFID tags," these chip and antenna combinations can be used to track items at a distance--right through someone's purse, backpack, or wallet. Many of the world's largest manufacturing companies would like to replace the bar code with these "spychips," meaning that virtually every item on the planet--and the people wearing and carrying those items--could be remotely tracked any time they come within range of a reader device. There is currently **no regulation** requiring retailers to inform consumers when the products they buy contain spychips.

Typical **RFID** tags transmit data up to 20 or 30 feet. Others can be as small as 0.4 square millimeters and thinner than a sheet of paper. Unless the items you buy are labeled as containing RFID tags, it can be virtually impossible to know if you've purchased one.

Q. Who is promoting this technology?

A. Wal-Mart is a big promoter of the RFID technology, demanding that its largest suppliers use it on crates and pallets or lose their place on its store shelves. Currently Wal-Mart stores in New Hampshire are stocking Hewlett Packard printers and computers that are individually tagged with spychips.

Gillette is also a heavy promoter of item-level tagging. In one recent example, they rigged a 'smart shelf' in a Brockton, MA Wal-Mart to observe customers picking up spychipped Mach3 razors. When questioned about it by the press, Wal-Mart removed the evidence and denied that it had ever happened. Unfortunately for them, CASPIAN founder Katherine Albrecht had taken pictures of the camera and shelf; when confronted with photos, their story changed to 'We never plugged it in.' Sure. Check out <http://www.boycottgillette.com/> for more information.

Q. How can my information be linked to the RFID tag number?

A. Just pay with a credit card, and your information can be linked to a RFID tag number, the same way your supermarket purchases can be linked to the number on a supermarket 'loyalty' card.

Q. But if I pay cash, or they don't scan the chip at checkout, my privacy is safe, right?

A. Not quite. What makes RFID tags different from barcodes is the fact that each one has a totally unique number. Everyone uses various unique identifiers in their daily lives; like a social security number or telephone number. And most of us consider that private information; we want to be able to control who we share that with. But when you carry a spy chipped item, its unique number can be read, cataloged, and tracked **without your knowledge or consent.**

So if you don't identify yourself when you first purchase a spychip, true, your name and other personal information won't be linked to the unique spychip number right away. But, just as when someone uses a fake name on a supermarket 'loyalty' card, any information about that unique number is still collected and filed away. It will continue to grow until the first time identity information is provided, like that on your credit card. And suddenly, there is a record of your activities dating back to the first time you received that number. Paying cash is no safeguard against spychips.

Q. How do I know if the items I purchase contain spy chips?

A. There is no way of knowing that any item on store shelves is spy chip free. Retailers are under no obligation to notify you when you purchase an item that has been tagged with an RFID chip. Some manufacturers have voluntarily labeled their products. One symbol in use is the EPC Global mark, the letters EPC in the shape of a cube.

Q. Who is fighting back against this invasion of our privacy?

A. Many privacy and civil liberties groups are opposed to item level tagging. For a list and a joint position paper which calls for a moratorium on item level tagging until the societal implications are worked out, please visit http://www.spychips.com/jointrfid_position_paper.html.

In New Hampshire, a statewide consumer watchdog group called **NH CASPIAN** (<http://www.nhcaspian.org>) is taking the lead to protect consumer privacy in New Hampshire against these tracking devices. Our recent protest at the Bedford Wal-Mart helped to call attention to Wal-Mart's violation of the principles set forth in the position paper. <http://www.salemobserver.com/bedford-bulletin/2005/11/news/09-bedford-walmart-protest.html>

According to Joel Rauch, founder of the New Hampshire chapter of **CASPIAN**, "Wal-Mart has introduced item level **RFID** tagging to the Granite State. Yet the Wal-Mart associates I spoke to were unable to provide me, as a consumer, with accurate information about what the EPC mark meant. It's irresponsible for Wal-Mart to force this invasive technology on New Hampshire before it has even educated its own workforce."

Q. What can I do?

A. Lots of things. Most Americans, when RFID technology is explained to them, recognize there are privacy concerns. Manufacturers are counting on ignorance and apathy so they can roll out the technology everywhere BEFORE people realize what is being done. Here are some ways to make a difference:

- 1. SHOP RESPONSIBLY:** Purchase products from companies that do not monitor shoppers, make a conscious choice not to support harmful corporate practices with your hard-earned shopping dollars and be consistent and courageous about your decision.
- 2. INFORM OTHERS:** Link to Spychips.com from your site; invite friends and family members to visit the website; invite a corporate type to visit this website; print up and distribute flyers; teach your children the importance of privacy
- 3. GET INVOLVED:** Check out Spychips.com and NHCASPIAN.com to learn more about how you can connect with others who feel the same way you do.

Sources for this flyer contain information from the bestselling book "Spychips: How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Move with RFID" as well as from the websites [spychips.com](http://www.spychips.com), boycottgillette.com, and nhcaspian.org. Permission is given for this flyer, copied in whole or in part, to be reprinted and distributed.

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