

HP's Memory Spot Presents Security Risk

Chip's size and wireless capability can be used by corporate thieves to steal valuable data

By Sumner Lemon, Info World, IDG News Service

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Hewlett-Packard's tiny Memory Spot chip is designed to put digital information on documents and photos. However, the chip's size and wireless capability can also be used by corporate thieves to copy and steal valuable data.

While the Memory Spot presents an added security challenge for companies, the risk can be managed, said James McQuivey, a professor at Boston University's College of Communication.

[Unveiled on Monday](#), the prototype Memory Spot is roughly the same size as a grain of rice and can store up to [4Mb of information](#). There are eight bits in a byte. The chip has an antenna that can transfer data at speeds up to 10Mbps and doesn't require its own power source. Instead, the chip draws its power from a chip reader through a process called inductive coupling, which allows power to cross from one component to another over a shared electromagnetic field.

Data stored on Memory Spot chips could be accessed using a variety of devices, such as specially equipped cell phones or PDAs (personal digital assistants), making them suitable for a range of applications, such as stickers applied to a paper document or printed photograph, HP said.

There are other possibilities. Memory Spot, which is not expected to be commercially available for several years, is just one of many devices that can be used by thieves to download and steal corporate information. Corporate security managers already face this threat from USB flash drives, portable hard disks, camera-equipped cell phones, and other devices.

"If you can't manage those today, the Memory Spot will be just another in a long line of possible data loss devices," McQuivey said. Companies that have put strong security policies in place will be able to handle advances in technology that make it possible to steal data, he said.

Memory Spot also offers an opportunity for companies, which can use them to disseminate product brochures and even video, such as commercials, McQuivey said. "This can be as much a positive thing for companies as a negative," he said.