Just Because You've Been LUCKY Enough To Avoid A Cyber-Attck Doesn't Mean You're Not At Risk

"Imagine walking into your office one morning to discover your computer network was breached by a hacker, exposing not only YOUR company's data, but also all of your client records and private communications. Imagine the embarrassment of having to notify your clients and vendors that, because of you, their private and possibly personal information may now be in the hands of cybercriminals. And hopefully that's the only damage done…

Operations could be halted or severely limited for days, possibly weeks. Your data corrupt to the point of being useless. Clients lost. Potential lawsuits and government fines for violating data-breach laws. The exorbitant emergency IT fees to get everything restored to working order fast. Then there's the risk of your bank account being drained dry – and because you're a business, you are NOT protected by the banks in the same way individual consumers are. Any money stolen out of your accounts could simply be gone forever.

I know you're tempted to think, "That won't happen to us. We're just a small company. Who'd want to hack us?"

Which is exactly what cybercriminals WANT you to think!

With St. Patrick's Day this month, take a moment to remember that just because you've been "lucky" enough to avoid an incident like this in the past doesn't mean you're not at risk – in fact, that's a very dangerous way to think.

Contact us today to find out how Preferred IT Group can help your business identify and mitigate risk in your network.

New Wearable Device Turns Your Body Into A Biological Battery
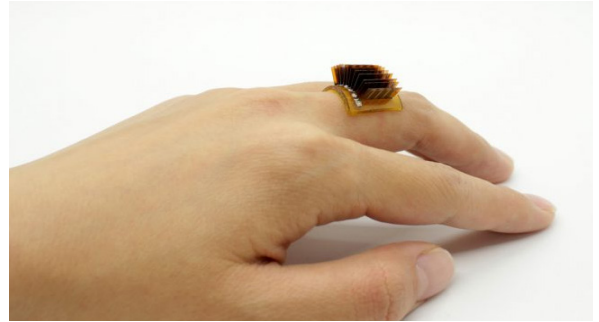
Researchers at CU Boulder have developed a new, low-cost wearable device that transforms the human body into a biological battery.

The device, described in the journal Science Advances, is stretchy enough that you can wear it like a ring, a bracelet or any other accessory that touches your skin. It also taps into a person's natural heat—employing thermoelectric generators to convert the body's internal temperature into electricity.

"In the future, we want to be able to power your wearable electronics without having to include a battery," said Jianliang Xiao, senior author of the new paper and an associate professor in the Paul M. Rady Department of Mechanical Engineering at CU Boulder.

The concept may sound like something out of The Matrix film series, in which a race of robots have enslaved humans to harvest their precious organic energy. Xiao and his colleagues aren't that ambitious: Their devices can generate about 1 volt of energy for every square centimeter of skin space—less voltage per area than what most existing batteries provide but still enough to power electronics like watches or fitness trackers. Scientists have previously experimented with similar thermoelectric wearable devices, but Xiao's is stretchy, can heal itself when damaged and is fully recyclable—making it a cleaner alternative to traditional electronics.

"Whenever you use a battery, you're depleting that battery and will, eventually, need to replace it," Xiao said. "The nice thing about our thermoelectric device is that you can wear it, and it provides you with constant power."

The project isn't Xiao's first attempt to meld human with robot. He and his colleagues previously experimented with designing "electronic skin," wearable devices that look, and behave, much like real human skin. That android epidermis, however, has to be connected to an external power source to work.

Until now. The group's latest innovation begins with a base made out of a stretchy material called polyimine. The scientists then stick a series of thin thermoelectric chips into that base, connecting them all with liquid metal wires. The final product looks like a cross between a plastic bracelet and a miniature computer motherboard or maybe a

techy diamond ring.

"Our design makes the whole system stretchable without introducing much strain to the thermoelectric material, which can be really brittle," Xiao said.

Just pretend that you're out for a jog. As you exercise, your body heats up, and that heat will radiate out to the cool air around you. Xiao's device captures that flow of energy rather than letting it go to waste.

"The thermoelectric generators are in close contact with the human body, and they can use the heat that would normally be dissipated into the environment," he said.

He added that you can easily boost that power by adding in more blocks of generators. In that sense, he compares his design to a popular children's toy.

"What I can do is combine these smaller units to get a bigger unit," he said. "It's like putting together a bunch of small Lego pieces to make a large structure. It gives you a lot of options for customization."

Xiao and his colleagues calculated, for example, that a person taking a brisk walk could use a device the size of a typical sports wristband to generate about 5 volts of electricity—which is more than what many watch batteries can muster.

Like Xiao's electronic skin, the new devices are as resilient as biological tissue. If your device tears, for example, you can pinch together the broken ends, and they'll seal back up in just a few minutes. And when you're done with the device, you can dunk it into a special solution that will separate out the electronic components and dissolve the polyimine base—each and every one of those ingredients can then be reused.

"We're trying to make our devices as cheap and reliable as possible, while also having as close to zero impact on the environment as possible," Xiao said.

While there are still kinks to work out in the design, he thinks that his group's devices could appear on the market in 5 to 10 years. Just don't tell the robots. We don't want them getting any ideas.
Source: https://scitechdaily.com/

7 Surprising Facts About St. Patrick's Day

1. The real St. Patrick was born in Britain: Much of what is known about St. Patrick's life has been interwoven with folklore and legend. Historians generally believe that St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Britain (not Ireland) near the end of the 4th century.

2. There were no snakes around for St. Patrick to banish from Ireland: Much of what is known about St. Patrick's life has been interwoven with folklore and legend. Historians generally believe that St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Britain (not Ireland) near the end of the 4th century.

3. Leprechauns are likely based on Celtic fairies: Belief in leprechauns likely stems from Celtic belief in fairies— tiny men and women who could use their magical powers to serve good or evil. In Celtic folktales, leprechauns were cranky souls, responsible for mending the shoes of the other fairies.

4. The shamrock was considered a sacred plant: The shamrock, a three-leaf clover, has been associated with Ireland for centuries. It was called the "seamroy" by the Celts and was considered a sacred plant that symbolized the arrival of spring.

5. The first St. Patrick's Day parade was held in America: While people in Ireland had celebrated St. Patrick since the 1600s, the tradition of a St. Patrick's Day parade began in America and actually predates the founding of the United States.

6. The Irish were once scorned in America: While Irish Americans are now proud to showcase their heritage, the Irish were not always celebrated by fellow Americans. Beginning in 1845, a devastating potato blight caused widespread hunger throughout Ireland. While approximately 1 million perished, another 2 million abandoned their land in the largest-single population movement of the 19th century. Most of the exiles—nearly a quarter of the Irish nation— came to the shores of the United States. Once they arrived, the Irish refugees were looked down upon as disease-ridden, unskilled and a drain on welfare budgets.

7. Corned beef and cabbage was an American innovation: While ham and cabbage were eaten in Ireland, corned beef offered a cheaper substitute for impoverished immigrants. Irish-Americans living in the slums of lower Manhattan in the late 19th century and early 20th, purchased leftover corned beef from ships returning from the tea trade in China. The Irish would boil the beef three times—the last time with cabbage—to remove some of the brine.
Source: history.com

MEET OUR NEW EMPLOYEE JANDRO SWART

Meet Preferred IT Group's newest employee Jandro Swart! He currently lives in Johannesburg, South Aftrica.

Jandro grew up in a family with computers in the house from as far back as he can remember. From an early age, computers fascinated him. He loves anything technology, from programming to gaming.

In his spare time he loves playing guitar, playing computer games, and building things. He has recently been dabbling in 3D printing, woodworking, and even some metalwork! When he's not helping our clients, he's probably building something!

Welcome to the team!

Nearly 30,000 Macs reportedly infected with mysterious malware

Nearly 30,000 Macs worldwide have been infected with mysterious malware, according to researchers at security firm Red Canary.The issue was somewhat confounding to Red Canary researchers, who said it's not clear what the malware's goal is. In a blog post, the firm said it did not observe the malware delivering "malicious payloads" — essentially, harmful actions against a device. The malware, which the company calls Silver Sparrow, does not "exhibit the behaviors that we've come to expect from the usual adware that so often targets macOS systems." Silver Sparrow includes a self-destruct mechanism that appears to have not been used, researchers said, adding that it's unclear what would trigger that function. They are also uncertain of how the malware got onto infected computers, though they believe it may have been through malicious search results. Silver Sparrow infected 29,139 Macs in 153 countries as of February 17, with higher concentrations reported in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France and Germany, according to data from Malwarebytes, a website that blocks ransomware attacks. Apple revoked the developer certificates used by the malware, a company spokesperson said, which will prevent any future infections. Revoking the developer certificates also creates barriers for any existing malware infections to be able to take additional actions.

Source: cnn.com

FUN FACT!

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