

Employee microchip implants raise ethical questions



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A tech company has become the first in the United States to plant microchips in its employees hands.

The device allows them to perform all manner of tasks and buy things with a mere sweep of the hand. But it's also raised 'Big Brother' concerns about being tracked.

CGTN's Owen Fairclough was in Wisconsin to watch a bit of technology history being made.



Tony Danna keeps smiling as the needle goes in; not even a grimace or wince as a microchip is implanted in his hands.

"That didn't hurt too bad," he declares.

It took just a few seconds for Tony to reach a new technological frontier – he works for the first US company to implant data chips in its employees hands.

He and around 50 colleagues at Three Square Market in River Falls, Wisconsin, can now start their cars open doors, log on to computers and buy snacks in their company break room, all with just a swipe of the hand from a device no bigger than a grain of rice.

The short-range encrypted RFID chips – similar to those used in credit cards– mean forgetting your wallet is a thing of the past; the chip is your wallet. And having fielded inquiries from central banks and embassies to create security systems it's quickly realizing the applications for encrypted short range microchips are limitless.

"If you come back in a month I'll be able to open my front door, turn the lights on have and AC/DC Hells Bells playing," Chief Executive Todd Westby said.

But not everyone's knocked out by this Swedish technology.

"My concern is just that the health effects of what is going to happen to my body when I put this foreign object in my hand down the road," Katie Langer, Three Square Market's marketing executive said.

The company recognizes there are privacy concerns. For example, potentially tracking when employees take breaks.

Even though these particular encrypted models can't track you, though they ultimately could. For some people, that's not a problem.

"We've fielded inquiries from parents with young kids that want to be able to implant their children with a GPS chip. I think you would be shocked by how many," Westby said.

Fifty out of the company's 85 employees have signed up as it begins to develop the commercial possibilities and applications.