



Chip and Pin smartcards ready to roll

**WHAT'S
NEW IN
THE
COMMIT
ARENA**

Northampton trial of UK-wide fraud-busting scheme went live in May. A groundbreaking trial of new smartcard technology that could slash the UK's £424.6m credit and debit card fraud bill in half has begun in Northampton. Northampton has been chosen as the test ground for a £1.1bn UK 'Chip and Pin' scheme, which is intended to be rolled out to 40 million consumers nationwide by 2005.

Thousands of credit, debit and charge card holders have been issued with new cards that contain secure smart chips, which will make it harder for criminals to 'skim' cards and make copies. And instead of verifying purchases at cash tills by signing receipts, customers will key in a four-digit Pin, just like at a cash machine, which will be verified by the chip on the card.

Major card issuers, including Barclaycard, MasterCard, American Express, HSBC, Egg, Switch and Visa, are taking part in the trial and have issued Northampton residents with 'smart' versions of their existing cards. A spokesman for Barclaycard, said that along with Barclays it has issued 80,000 of the new credit and debit cards to existing customers for the trial. "We take our fair share of fraud hits and it puts our customers through an enormous amount of hassle. Chip and Pin will be a step change in our ability to counteract counterfeit card fraud in particular," he said.

Around 1,000 retailers are expected to take part in the trial with the likes of Marks & Spencer, McDonald's, Morrisons, Tesco, WH Smith and Woolworths already confirmed.

The UK is somewhat behind other countries in Europe, such as France, which have been using the Pin method for 10 years and have seen an 80% reduction in card fraud. A spokeswoman for the Chip and Pin scheme said that the initiative will see "very substantial" reductions in UK fraud figures "of up to 50%".

The scheme is being spearheaded by the Association for Payment Clearing Services (APACS), the UK trade body for the payments industry, which said it will involve the upgrading of 850,000 retailer terminals, 122 million cards and 40,000 cash machines by 2005.

"More than £1m worth of card fraud is committed every day," said Chris Pearson, chief executive of APACS. "We're putting in measures which will have a significant impact on this figure to ensure better safety for UK consumers and help take away the nightmare of card fraud."

Dear Members,

The recent events in Riyadh have shaken us all and reminded us of how vulnerable we all are in our roles as expatriates in Saudi Arabia. My heart felt sorrow goes out to all the friends and family of the 26 people killed and the many more who were injured in these attacks.

We are all affected in some way or another by these events, for me this had led to my resignation from my company and to move elsewhere to seek the future for my family. This of course, will result in the chairmanship of COMMIT group opening up. If you are working in the IT or Telecommunications Field and believe you can provide a valuable contribution to this SIG, then please put your name forward to Martin Dickinson (mdickinson@anb.com.sa or scubamartinsa@yahoo.co.uk) or the RGBB secretary who will forward your name to the appropriate person.

In my role as COMMIT Chairman, I might not have performed as the group would have expected. However in my defense, I was elected to this position during an unfortunate period in the region. The time leading up to the war in Iraq, the war in Iraq and the recent events here in Riyadh have all contributed to this lack of activity for the group. Hopefully as peace and calm returns to the region the new COMMIT chairman will be able to make a difference for the group. I would like to wish my successor all the best in his position.

Last but not least, on behalf of me and my wife I would like to thank all the members of the RGBB and The British Embassy for your friendship and support that have made my 4 years in Saudi Arabia unforgettable. Because without this friendship and support I am sure we would never have stayed as long as we have! We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

If you wish to stay in contact, then you can email me on PL020296@yahoo.com.

Kind regards,
Paul Brown