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'Paper Hackers'

Research reveals 'low-tech' security threat to UK's legal sector

Whilst British businesses spend £215 million* last year shoring up their defences against wave after wave of invisible hi-tech attacks, new research suggests one of the biggest security weaknesses facing the UK's legal sector is in fact the age-old medium of paper.

Despite the confidentiality of the legal profession, the study by printer experts Lexmark, reveals that many lawyers are not aware of the security threat posed by the careless handling of sensitive paper documents:

- Over a fifth (22%) of lawyers fail to retrieve sensitive documents from the printer
- The legal profession's printer trays contain more sensitive information than any other professional sector in the UK. Nearly two thirds (59%) of documents left there contain sensitive client or colleague information.
- Nearly a third (30%) look through colleagues' documents when they see them on the printer tray
- Almost a third (29%) of professional workers in the legal sector leave confidential papers open on their desk
- Nearly two thirds (64%) of legal sector employees put sensitive papers in the bin rather than putting them through the shredder
- IT and medical professionals are the most conscientious, with 44% regularly shredding confidential papers

This careless handling of sensitive paper documents by UK workers is highlighted by Transport for London's lost property office who confirmed that approximately 2,500 briefcases** were left behind on public transport in the city during the last year.

The lack of good practice in paper security is all the more alarming given that over three-quarters of UK legal sector workers (83%) rate paper documents as more powerful and authoritative than email or telephone communication.

Lexmark commissioned the study to celebrate the launch of its new printer range which features a “confidential print” functionality, helping to counteract the threat of paper security.

“As well as hi-tech security measures, companies need to adopt a back-to-basics approach to raise awareness of the importance of paper security and to help workers in the legal sector to manage confidential documents,” said Giovanni Giusti, Managing Director of Lexmark UK.

Lexmark has a variety of solutions to help businesses protect confidential and sensitive documents. A **Confidential Print** feature on most Lexmark devices ensures that employees must enter a PIN number to retrieve a document from the printer, avoiding confidential documents left sitting on the printer tray.

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* **Source:** Canals Enterprise Security Analysis Service, March 2004

** **Source:** Transport for London lost property data, November 2004 – October 2005

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Notes to Editor

ICM Research interviewed a random sample of 500 adults aged 18+ by telephone in November 2005. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Further information at www.icmresearch.co.uk

About Lexmark

Lexmark International, Inc. makes it easier for businesses and consumers to move information between the digital and paper worlds. Since its inception in 1991, Lexmark has become a leading developer, manufacturer and supplier of printing and imaging solutions for customers in more than 150 countries. Lexmark reported \$5.3 billion in revenue in 2004, and can be found on the Internet at www.lexmark.com.

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