



19 January 2005

## **'Paper Hackers'**

### **Research reveals 'low-tech' security threat to UK public 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 public sector is in fact the age-old medium of paper.

The study, by printer experts Lexmark reveals the public sector is still in the dark ages when it comes to handling and securing sensitive paper documents:

- Almost a quarter (24%) of public sector workers in the UK leave confidential papers open on their desk
- The printer tray is a major security weakness in the UK's public sector. Nearly a third (30%) of documents left there contain sensitive client or colleague information and over a third (35%) look through colleagues' documents when they see them on the printer tray
- Almost two thirds (66%) of public sector employees put sensitive papers in the bin rather than putting them through the shredder
- Despite the importance of confidentiality in the legal profession, lawyers are the biggest offenders with over a fifth (22%) failing to retrieve sensitive documents from the printer
- 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 three-quarters of UK public sector workers (75%) 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.

### **Professional Printers**

Lawyers have emerged as the most likely profession to forget about document security with over a fifth (22%) admitting to leaving behind sensitive documents which have been printed. It was revealed that nearly two thirds (59%) of this paper contains sensitive client information.

IT and medical professionals are the most conscientious, with 44% regularly shredding confidential papers. Marketing professionals were revealed as the biggest snoops with a quarter (25%) of workers in this sector admitting to having a quick peek at other people’s confidential documents when they are left open or forgotten.

“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 public 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

**For further information please contact:**

Lisa Canning  
Lexmark International  
Tel: 0870 444 0044  
Email: [lisamarie.canning@lexmark.co.uk](mailto:lisamarie.canning@lexmark.co.uk)

Kate Beames  
red consultancy  
Tel: 0207 025 6509  
Email: [kate.beames@redconsultancy.com](mailto:kate.beames@redconsultancy.com)

**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](http://www.icmresearch.co.uk)

**About Lexmark**

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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](http://www.lexmark.com).

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