

Just Because You're Paranoid....
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Do you think you are safe sending that anonymous letter to the editor? If you used a laser printer, think again. According to an article by Jason Tuohey (*Government Uses Color Laser Printer Technology to Track Documents*, PC World.Com 11/22/04) almost all printer companies embed the printer's serial number and manufacturing code on each page of every document they produce. The net result is a microscopic tattletale track back to you.

The Secret Service claims law enforcement only uses the embedded serial numbers when they suspect counterfeiting or a criminal act. Privacy advocates take little comfort in that assurance. According to Touhey, The Center for Democracy and Technology believe that "...there needs to be a notice to consumers." Currently, no requirement of such notice exists.

According to Paul Crean, from Xerox, the technology—developed specifically to foil counterfeiters--has been in existence for about 20 years.

As a consumer, you cannot disable the encoding device without damaging or destroying your printer. To see if you have the device on your laser printer, Tuohey recommends you shine a blue LED light across a page produced by the printer in question while looking through a magnifying device. If you see small yellow dots within the words or margins, you're printer can tell on you.

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