

Coveted hacker badges go radioactive

August 9 2015



Uber badges, once known as black badges, promise free lifetime admission to annual Def Con conferences and are coveted prizes sought by hackers

The Uber badge awarded to champion hackers at Def Con here in Las Vegas has a certain glow.

That's because it's radioactive.

Uber badges, once known as black badges, promise free lifetime admission to annual Def Con conferences and are coveted prizes sought

by hackers who battle in contests ranging from computer network version of Capture The Flag to a complex puzzle challenge.

"It's also bragging rights," Ryan Clarke, creator of the mystery puzzle challenge and the uber badge told AFP at the 23rd annual Def Con, which ends on Sunday.

"I know people who have sought jobs by putting on their resume that they won a Def Con badge."

Uber badge holders have elite status at the world's largest and most infamous hacker gathering.

Each point on this year's triangle-shaped Uber badge features a different form of radioactive material, according to Clarke. One corner is mounted with a Uranium doped marble.

A second corner has a small vial of tritium inside a crystal skull.

Given its nature, the tritium should glow softly for two decades, according to Clarke. Tritium has been used to illuminate watch face numbers and road signs.

A third corner of the badge contains radioactive material that Clarke said came from the place in New Mexico where the first [atomic bomb](#) was tested in 1945.

"The entire thing is mounted in a Lichtenberg sculpture; acrylic irradiated in a particle accelerator and then forcibly discharged," Clarke said as he held his [uber](#) badge in both hands.

The process used for Lichtenberg sculptures involves powerful electric charges that leave behind lightning bolt patterns.

"In essence, freezing lightning in time," Clarke said.

The badge was described as a tribute to late physicist Richard Feynman who took part in developing the atomic bomb during World War II.

Clarke assured the Def Con crowd that Uber badges being awarded on Sunday were safe to handle.

"I try to entertain myself with these badges," Clarke said. "One year, we bought the whole stock of a certain kind of titanium."

© 2015 AFP

Citation: Coveted hacker badges go radioactive (2015, August 9) retrieved 25 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-08-coveted-hacker-badges-radioactive.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.