

Software defect hits millions of German bank cards

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(AP) -- Millions of German bank cards have been affected by a "millennium bug"-like problem because they contain software that can't process the number 2010, industry groups said Tuesday.

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The DSGV group, which represents public-sector banks, said some 20 million debit cards issued by those banks were affected, along with around 3.5 million credit cards - nearly half of the total number of cards issued by those banks.

The group said cash machines were adjusted hours after the problem emerged to ensure that customers could withdraw money, but there may still be problems using some debit-card terminals. Those should be fixed by Monday, it said.

Problems remain with credit cards and customers should use debit cards instead for now, added the group.

The BVR group of cooperative banks said about 4 million debit cards issued by its members - about 15 percent of the total - also were afflicted by the faulty software, although there were no problems withdrawing cash. Its credit cards were unaffected.

Another 2.5 million cards issued by German private banks were affected.

The problem stemmed from a chip on the cards which, due to a programming fault, wouldn't correctly process the number 2010.

Computer experts widely believed that hardware and software systems would fail as the clocks rolled over to the year 2000.

The problem, they said, would be caused when computers and other devices, which used only two digits to represent the year, mistook the year 2000 for the year 1900. In the end, however, the so-called "millennium bug" caused few problems.

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