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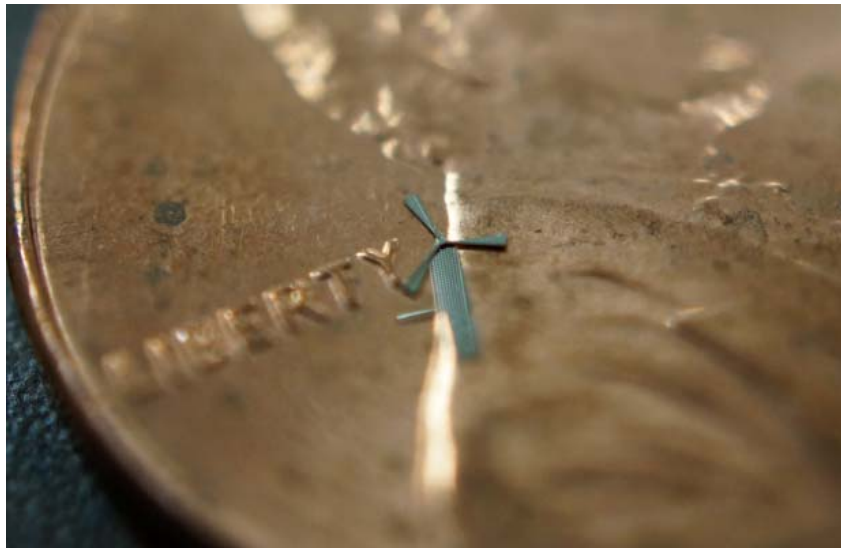
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SCIENCE

0

A Windmill the Size of a Freckle Could Power Smartphones

By Martin Smith · On January 16, 2014

How could a windmill that's 1.8 mm thick power anything? 10 of these little things can fit onto one single grain of rice. An ant would be pretty upset if that's all he had to keep cool in the summer. Luckily for humanity's sake, keeping ants cozy was not what the inventors had in mind when they created these micro mills. Smitha Rao and J.-C. Chiao of UT Arlington designed these with the hope of placing them inside cellphones. They believe that a large quantity of mills could generate enough wind energy to recharge your device. However, wouldn't you have to be outside on a windy day in order for this to work? The researchers at UTA claim that just by waving it through the air, you would be able to generate enough electricity to feed your phones battery. You can already envision people walking down a busy street, thrashing around in the air like a four-year-old with a new toy airplane.

Okay, I'm going to admit, the video below is not very impressive. It was added by the Taiwanese technology company WinMEMS. They have already invested in the micro windmills and plan on commercializing them.

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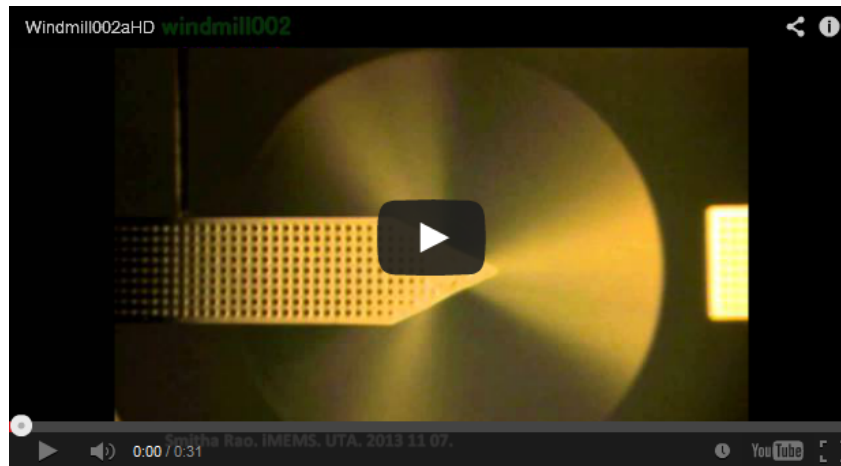
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This design has apparently just scratched the surface in terms of how it will be officially used. Sticking these windmills inside phones just happens to be what the designers are currently pushing. Needless to say, immediately hopping on the sustainable recharging idea was not a bad choice. Other methods for powering mobile devices—without a wall outlet—are already in the works. You know the mechanical energy that zaps you every time you step out of the car? Yes, static electricity may power your cellphone in the near future. According to researchers at Georgia Tech, a phone bouncing around in your pocket can generate enough mechanical power to actually charge a battery. This is possible because the constant friction from your phone moving around can generate static electricity, which is then harnessable for use. Because I wish to refrain from sounding like too much of a futuristic-tech rookie, I will now stop pretending like I know what I'm talking about.

The resources used, in case you're fixin' for some more nano technology details:

<http://www.technologyreview.com/news/507386/how-friction-may-someday-charge-your-cell-phone/>

<http://www.uta.edu/news/releases/2014/01/microwindmill-rao-chiao.php>

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