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TINY WINDMILLS COULD RECHARGE SMARTPHONE BATTERIES

Micro power sources that might offer a solution to dying phone batteries.

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Serena Chu on January 13, 2014.

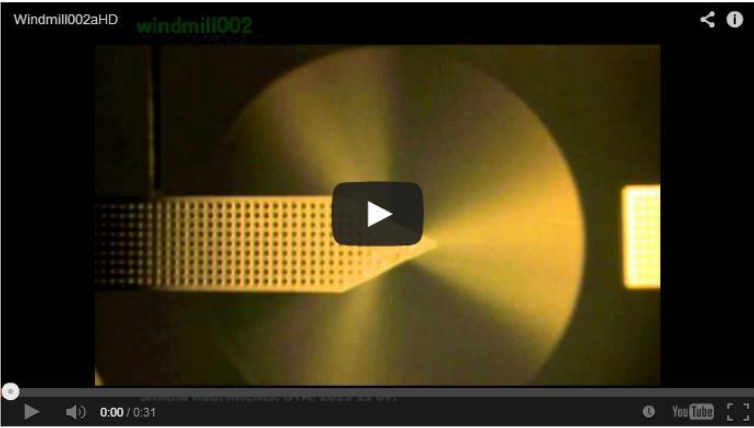
Making a claim on sustainable energy, researchers at the University of Texas Arlington have built micro-windmill models that are no bigger than the size of a pinhead to offer an alternative for power generation for mobile devices. The inventive micro-robotic technique behind these minuscule windmills could potentially revive your dead phone in a matter of minutes. Made of a flexible nickel alloy, the delicate devices could be embedded in mobile devices to capture wind created by waving a phone in the air or holding it to an open window.

Exploring green technology on a smaller-scale, engineers Smitha Roa and J.-C Chiao are able to fit 10 of these itty-bitsy windmills, approximately 1.8 mm in diameter, on a single grain of rice. This fusion of origami concepts and conventional wafer-scale semiconductor device designs cast light on how 3D moveable mechanical structures can be self-assembled from two-dimensional metal pieces utilizing planar multilayer electroplating techniques.

Excited about the potential applications of these tiny models, Taiwanese company WinMEMS Technologies Co. secured exclusive rights to commercializing the concept. Currently looking to spearhead a new direction for batteries of handheld devices, Chiao also wants to further developments to include thousands of wall-mount windmills in homes where large turbines are not impractical.

It's easy to underestimate these micro-machines, but keeping an open mind about them is our best bet to advance into a greener, more sustainable world.

See the tiny-windmill for yourself below.



Source: *The Verge*, *Phys.org*

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