

Privacy group files FTC complaint on Google Buzz

February 16 2010

(AP) -- A privacy watchdog group complained to federal regulators on Tuesday about Google's new Buzz social networking service, saying it violates federal consumer protection law.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center filed its complaint with the Federal Trade Commission just days after Google Inc. altered the service to address mounting privacy concerns.

Since launching Google Buzz as part of Gmail a week ago, the search company has come under fire for automatically creating public circles of friends for users based on their most frequent Gmail contacts. Over the weekend, Google altered the service to merely suggest contacts for its users' social networks.

Despite the changes, EPIC said privacy violations remain because Google automatically signs up Gmail users for Buzz, rather than waiting for them to do so themselves, or "opt in" for the service. The company does give users the option to disable the new service.

EPIC wants the FTC to require that Google make Buzz an opt-in service. It also wants the company barred from using Gmail address book contacts to compile social networking lists.

"This is a significant breach of consumers' expectations of privacy," EPIC Executive Director Marc Rotenberg said in a statement. "Google should not be allowed to push users' personal information into a social

network they never requested."

In response to the EPIC complaint, Google said it has already made some changes to Buzz based on user feedback and has "more improvements in the works."

"We look forward to hearing more suggestions and will continue to improve the Buzz experience with user transparency and control top of mind," the company said.

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Citation: Privacy group files FTC complaint on Google Buzz (2010, February 16) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-02-privacy-group-ftc-complaint-google.html>

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