

FTC ends inquiry into Google 'Street View' data collection

October 27 2010



The US Federal Trade Commission said Wednesday that it was ending its inquiry into the collection of private wireless data by Google's "Street View" mapping service.

The US Federal Trade Commission said Wednesday that it was ending its inquiry into the collection of private wireless data by Google's "Street View" mapping service.

The FTC, in a letter to the Mountain View, California-based Google, noted recent moves made by the company to prevent such an incident from happening again, and said it was satisfied with the commitments from the search giant.

Google pledged last week to strengthen its privacy and security practices after its "[Street View](#)" cars scooped up data from unsecured [wireless](#)

[networks](#), including entire emails and passwords, in dozens of countries.

Google appointed Alma Whitten, a Google expert on privacy and security, as director of privacy and said the company would enhance privacy training and "information security awareness."

In addition, Google will require that a "privacy design document" be included as part of all of its engineering projects

The FTC welcomed the moves and Google's pledge to "delete the inadvertently collected payload data as soon as possible.

"Further, Google has made assurances to the FTC that the company has not used and will not use any of the payload data collected in any Google product or service, now or in the future," it said.

"This assurance is critical to mitigate the potential harm to consumers from the collection of payload data.

"Because of these commitments, we are ending our inquiry into this matter at this time," the letter from the FTC continued.

"We ask that the company continue its dialogue with the FTC about how best to protect consumer privacy as it develops its products and services."

Google announced in May that Street View cars taking photographs of cities in more than 30 countries had inadvertently gathered data sent over unsecured Wi-Fi systems.

According to Canada's privacy commissioner, the data collected included "complete emails, email addresses, user names and passwords, names and residential telephone numbers and addresses.

Google has since stopped the collection of Wi-Fi data, used to provide location-based services such as driving directions in Google Maps and other products, by Street View cars.

Google is facing civil suits in Oregon and several other US states demanding millions of dollars in damages over its collection of personal wireless data and a number of countries have taken action against Street View.

Spain's data protection authority has filed suit against Google and the Czech data protection authority last month banned the company from taking Street View pictures, saying they violated [privacy](#).

Google this week said that nearly a quarter of a million Germans have asked the Internet company to pixel out images of their houses on Street View.

Street View, which was launched in 2006, lets users view panoramic street scenes on [Google](#) Maps and take a virtual "walk" through cities such as New York, Paris or Hong Kong.

(c) 2010 AFP

Citation: FTC ends inquiry into Google 'Street View' data collection (2010, October 27) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-10-ftc-inquiry-google-street-view.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.