

Italy latest country to probe Google's Street View

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(AP) -- Italian prosecutors said Wednesday they have opened an investigation into Google's Street View mapping feature for suspected violation of privacy.

Google said it would cooperate with authorities and apologized for any inadvertent collection of private data from unencrypted networks in Italy.

Several countries have expressed concerns over the [Street View](#) program, which provides street-level images on Google Earth and [Google Maps](#). Google admitted that its researchers collected wireless information including entire e-mails, URLs and passwords.

The Rome investigation was made public days after Italy's privacy watchdog asked Google to make sure its data-collecting cars are clearly marked and for the company to keep citizens informed about the vehicles' routes. The watchdog said the information currently made available by Google is insufficient.

Google said a statement that it was "profoundly sorry for having mistakenly collected payload data from unencrypted networks in Italy."

"As soon as we realized what had happened, we stopped collecting all WiFi data from our Street View cars and immediately informed the authorities," the statement said, adding that the data has never been used and was never intended to be used, and that Google wants to delete it as

soon as possible.

In February, a Milan judge convicted three [Google](#) employees of violating the [privacy](#) of an autistic teen because the Internet giant sought profit when it hosted an online video of him being bullied. The three were given suspended six-month sentences in a criminal verdict that was condemned by defenders of Internet freedom.

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