

SKorean police say Google collects personal info

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(AP) -- Google Inc. collected e-mails and other personal information from unsecured wireless networks in South Korea while taking photographs for its Street View mapping service, police said Thursday.

In May, the American search giant announced that it had inadvertently collected fragments of people's online activities from unsecured Wi-Fi networks in more than 30 countries, a disclosure that prompted investigations around the globe.

Google's [Street View](#) program 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.

Google accessed [private data](#) as its cars took photos of neighborhoods in Seoul and three other major cities in [South Korea](#) between October 2009 and May 2010, said Jung Suk-hwa, a police officer in charge of the investigation.

Jung said the police reached the preliminary conclusion after analyzing hard disks obtained from Google, noting that police plan to wrap up the investigation as early as this month.

South Korea's mass-circulation Dong-a Ilbo newspaper first reported the case on Thursday.

Police suspect that Google's activities break the country's laws protecting

privacy of telecommunications.

It was not immediately clear whether Google and its officials might face prosecution or some sort of penalty under South Korean laws.

Google apologized for intruding and vowed to continue to cooperate with South Korean authorities.

"We are profoundly sorry for having mistakenly collected payload data from unencrypted networks. As soon as we realized what had happened, we stopped collecting all Wi-Fi data from our Street View cars and immediately informed the authorities," Google Korea said in an e-mailed statement released by a public relations firm.

"We have been cooperating with the Korean Communications Commission and the police, and will continue to do so. Our ultimate objective remains to delete the data consistent with our legal obligations and in consultation with the appropriate authorities."

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