

France fines Google 100,000 euros over Street View (Update)

March 21 2011



The camera of a street-view car, used to photograph whole streets, is seen on the Google street-view stand at the CeBIT high-tech fair in Hanover. France's data privacy regulator has said it had imposed a record fine of 100,000 euros (\$142,000) on Google for having collected private information while compiling its panoramic Street View service.

France's data privacy regulator said Monday it had imposed a record fine of 100,000 euros (\$142,000) on Google for private information collected while compiling its panoramic Street View service.

"It is a record fine since we obtained the power in 2004 to impose financial sanctions in 2004," the head of the CNIL regulator, Yann Padova, was quoted as saying in the daily Le Parisien.

Google launched in 2007 its Street View service, which provides panoramic views of city streets, but its arrival in Europe sparked controversy over privacy concerns.

In addition to concerns about the photos taken, Google admitted in 2010 that its specially equipped cars taking the photographs were also picking up Wi-Fi data and had inadvertently captured unencrypted private data including passwords and e-mails.

CNIL, the National Commission for Information Freedom, said Google had pledged to erase all the private data, but that it had found "that Google has not refrained from using the data identifying Wi-Fi access points of individuals without their knowledge."

The regulator said it decided to impose the fine as this constituted "unfair collection" of information under French law and it had received economic benefits from the data.

Google once again apologised for having collected private data.

"As we have said before, we are profoundly sorry for having mistakenly collected payload data from unencrypted WiFi networks," said Google's lawyer for privacy issues, Peter Fleischer.

"Deleting the data has always been our priority, and we're happy the CNIL has given permission for us to do so," he added in a statement.

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