

# Staggering surge in Android gadget viruses: Juniper

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A man demonstrates a weather application on the Nexus One smartphone running the Android platform, during a news conference at Google headquarters in Mountain View, California, 2010. The arsenal of malicious code aimed at Android-powered gadgets has grown exponentially, with criminals hiding viruses in applications people download to devices, according to Juniper Networks.

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The computer systems specialty firm's Global Threat Center found "staggering growth" in mobile "[malware](#)" targeting the Google-backed Android platform, according to findings available online Wednesday.

Juniper researchers reported seeing a 472 percent surge in the number of new viruses crafted to attack Android devices since July.

Slightly more than half of the malicious applications uncovered were "spyware" designed to steal messages, location, identity or other personal information from devices, according to California-based Juniper.

Most of the remaining viruses were designed to bilk money from smartphone users by [sending text messages](#) to premium rate numbers without device owners knowing.

Android devices are prime targets because the online marketplace for third-party applications such as games does nothing to check software for hidden threats, according to Juniper.

"The main reason for the malware epidemic on Android is because of different approaches that Apple and [Google](#) take to police their application stores," Juniper researchers said in a blog post.

"Android's open applications store model, which lacks code signing and an application review process that Apple requires, makes it easy for attackers to distribute their malware," they said.

Apple, on the other hand, is known for stringently screening applications before making them available at the App Store for download to iPhones, [iPads](#) or iPod Touch devices.

"There is still no upfront review process in the official Android Market that offers even the hint of a challenge to malware writers that their investment in coding malware will be for naught," Juniper said.

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