

Google tightens grip on smartphone wallets

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"Mobile payments are going to become more common in the coming years, and we will learn much more as we continue to develop [Google Wallet](#)," Google payments vice president Osama Bedier said in a blog post.

"In the meantime, you can be confident that the [digital wallet](#) you carry provides defenses that plastic and leather simply don't."

A Google Wallet feature that lets people load prepaid card information

in smartphones for spending was re-activated this week after being shut off for a few days to fix a potential security vulnerability.

"While we're not aware of any abuse of prepaid cards or the Wallet PIN resulting from these recent reports, we took this step as a precaution to ensure the security of our Wallet customers," Bedier said.

The action from Google came after a Zvelo Labs researcher demonstrated software that quickly figures out a Wallet [personal identification number](#) (PIN), provided the crook has the smartphone.

The researcher dismissed the threat of hackers picking Google Wallets remotely, explaining that physical access is needed to get priority access to controls in a process called "rooting."

Security specialists advise Google Wallet to enable [security features](#) such as full-disk encryption and screen locks.

Google Wallet is available only on Nexus S and Galaxy Nexus smartphones. Google plans to expand the feature to more Android phones.

Google Wallet uses a near field communication chip embedded in a phone to allow a user to "tap-and-pay" for purchases at a checkout register equipped with the PayPass system from CitiMasterCard.

Customers can also use a Google Prepaid card to pay for purchases, topping up the Google card with any payment card, and take advantage of Google Offers, the Mountain View, California-based company's online discount [coupon program](#).

In addition to allowing for [mobile payments](#), Google Wallet allows consumers to pay using gift cards and to redeem promotions such as

discounts or coupons.

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