

# Apple to seek safeguards for iPhone contact lists

February 15 2012

---



Two US lawmakers asked Apple on Wednesday about reports that applications running on the company's popular devices may access private data without permission.

Apple on Wednesday said application developers will have to get express permission from users before tapping into contact information stored in its popular gadgets, in a move to address privacy concerns.

The maker of iPhones, iPads, and iPods made its position clear after two US lawmakers asked the California-based company whether "apps" running on the company's devices may be accessing private data without asking users.

"Apps that collect or transmit a user's contact data without their prior permission are in violation of our guidelines," Apple spokesman Tom

Neumayr said in an email response to an AFP inquiry.

"We're working to make this even better for our customers, and as we have done with location services, any app wishing to access contact data will require explicit user approval in a future software release," he said.

Representatives Henry Waxman and G.K. Butterfield sent a letter to Apple chief executive Tim Cook following reports that social networking app Path collected and stored address book information without explicitly asking for a user's consent.

"This incident raises questions about whether Apple's iOS app developer policies and practices may fall short when it comes to protecting the information of iPhone users and their contacts," they said.

Waxman, a Democrat from California, and Butterfield, a Democrat from North Carolina, asked "how many iOS apps in the US iTunes Store transmit information from the address book?

"How many of those ask for the user's consent before transmitting their contacts' information?" they asked.

In a blog post last week, Path co-founder and chief executive David Morin apologized for uploading users' address book information without asking for permission.

"We made a mistake," Morin said. "We are deeply sorry if you were uncomfortable with how our application used your phone contacts."

Path released updated applications modified to ask users whether they would like to opt in or out of letting the service use personal contact lists to help them connect with friends or family at the social network.

Apple reviews applications created by independent software developers before featuring them in its online App Store.

The cornucopia of fun, hip, or functional mini-programs tailored for iPhones, iPods, and iPads by outside developers is considered to be among the factors underpinning the global appeal of the gadgets.

Apple sold an unprecedented 37 million iPhones in the final quarter of last year and the pace at which buyers are snatching up iPads is something "no one would have guessed," Cook said Tuesday at a conference in San Francisco.

Apple shares, which soared past the \$500 mark on Monday, lost 2.31 percent on Wednesday to close at \$497.67.

(c) 2012 AFP

Citation: Apple to seek safeguards for iPhone contact lists (2012, February 15) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-02-lawmakers-query-apple-privacy.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.