

Lawsuit seeks to block Google's privacy changes (Update)

February 8 2012

(AP) -- A consumer watchdog group is suing the Federal Trade Commission in an attempt to prevent Google from making sweeping changes to its privacy policies next month.

The planned revisions would enable Google Inc. to bundle the personal information gathered by its Internet search engine and other services, such as Gmail, YouTube and Plus, so the company can gain a better understanding of its users and potentially sell more advertising. Google has depicted the switch as an improvement that will make its privacy policies easier to understand and help deliver more helpful information to users.

But the Electronic Privacy Information Center contends Google's new policies would violate restrictions imposed in an agreement reached with the FTC last year. Google submitted to the rules to resolve complaints that the company had improperly exposed users' email contacts in a now-defunct service called Buzz.

A lawsuit filed Wednesday by EPIC maintains the agreement gives FTC the power to stop Google from making the planned privacy change. The complaint also is seeking an order from a Washington federal court to block Google's policy changes from taking effect March 1.

European regulators already have asked Google to delay the policy changes

Among other things, EPIC alleges Google's new privacy guidelines require users' consent. The group also alleges Google hasn't thoroughly explained the motives for the changes, making it an "unfair and deceptive business practice."

In a statement, Google said it has gone to great lengths to explain the changes to users since announcing the planned switch two weeks ago. The Mountain View, Calif., company previously has said it explained the privacy revisions to the FTC.

"We take privacy very seriously," Google said. "We're happy to engage in constructive conversations about our updated privacy policy, but EPIC is wrong on the facts and the law."

FTC spokeswoman Claudia Bourne Farrell said agency "takes compliance with our consent orders very seriously and always looks carefully at any evidence that they are being violated."

©2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Lawsuit seeks to block Google's privacy changes (Update) (2012, February 8) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-02-lawsuit-block-google-privacy.html>

<p>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.</p>
--