

AT&T to join rivals with 'transparency report'

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The AT&T logo is seen on June 2, 2010 in Washington DC.

AT&T said Friday it would join rivals in the tech and telecom sector in publishing a "transparency report" about demands for information from law enforcement agencies.

The announcement came a day after a similar announcement from sector rival Verizon, which follow releases from big [technology firms](#) including

Google, Apple and Microsoft, and intense scrutiny of these firms in light of revelations of wide-ranging US government surveillance programs.

AT&T said in a statement it would release a semiannual report starting in early 2014 with information "to the extent permitted by laws and regulations."

The report will include the total number of law enforcement agency requests in criminal cases, subpoenas, court orders and warrants.

AT&T said it believes that "any disclosures regarding classified information should come from the government, which is in the best position to determine what can be lawfully disclosed and would or would not harm national security."

The telecom giant said that "protecting our customers' information and privacy is paramount," and that it complies with legal requests in the countries where it operates.

"We work hard to make sure that the requests or orders are valid and that our response to them is lawful," the AT&T statement said.

"We've challenged court orders, subpoenas and other requests from local, state and federal governmental entities—and will continue to do so, if we believe they are unlawful. We do not allow any [government agency](#) to connect directly to our network to gather, review or retrieve our customers' information."

The announcements from AT&T and Verizon come after a period when the telecom firms were notably absent from a debate on disclosures about the scope of US surveillance programs from fugitive former intelligence contractor Edward Snowden.

But the telecom and tech firms are still barred from releasing data on national security requests from the FBI and US intelligence services.

A push by the tech sector to get authorization to release the sensitive data requests got a boost this week from an independent review board appointed by President Barack Obama, which recommended that this data be published.

Tech firms have said the sales overseas are being hurt by a perception that the US government can easily gain access to their networks.

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