

## US says cybersecurity sharing not an antitrust issue

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Deputy Attorney General James Cole in Washington, DC, on February 26, 2014

US officials announced Thursday that companies sharing information about cybersecurity would not face prosecution on antitrust grounds.

The news came amid heightened concerns about data breaches and malware that can foil online encryption to allow hackers to steal passwords or other personal data.

Officials at the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission said they issued formal guidance telling companies that there would be no [antitrust issues](#) from the sharing of technical information about cyber attacks, malware or similar threats.

"Some companies have told us that concerns about antitrust liability has been a barrier to being able to openly share cyber threat information with each other. We have heard them," Deputy Attorney General James Cole told reporters.

"And speaking on behalf of everyone here today, this guidance responds to those concerns, lets everyone know that antitrust concerns should not get in the way of sharing cybersecurity information, and signals our continued commitment to expanding the sharing of cybersecurity information."

FTC chairwoman Edith Ramirez, who joined the announcement, noted that "the [antitrust laws](#) are not an impediment to the legitimate sharing of cybersecurity threat information among private businesses."

The news came amid concerns about malware circulating on the Internet called Heartbleed which could circumvent encryption and allow attackers to illicitly retrieve passwords and other bits of information from working memory on computer servers.

It also comes months after the revelation of a [data breach](#) at US retailer Target which may have exposed [personal information](#) of as many as 110 million consumers

Rand Beers, a White House homeland security aide, said the new policy would encourage companies to develop a common defense against attacks such as "phishing," which are emails whose origin is disguised in an effort to obtain login information.

"If companies are sharing information with each other, detection by one [company](#) means that other companies can be prepared to face the same threat," Beers said.

Cole said the US administration still backs legislation on [cybersecurity](#) that would enable greater sharing of threat information between government and industry, and standards for reporting of incidents.

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