

Yelp to pay US fine for child privacy violation

September 17 2014



Online ratings operator Yelp agreed to pay \$450,000 to settle US charges that it illegally collected data on children, in violation of privacy laws, officials said

Online ratings operator Yelp agreed to pay \$450,000 to settle US charges that it illegally collected data on children, in violation of privacy laws, officials said Wednesday.

The US Federal Trade Commission said that Yelp, from 2009 to 2013,

collected personal information from [children](#) through the Yelp app without first notifying parents and obtaining their consent.

According to the FTC, several thousand children provided a date of birth showing they were under 13 years old, but that Yelp nevertheless collected information from them, including names, e-mail addresses and locations, as well as other information that they posted.

The investigation found that Yelp's [mobile app](#) failed to follow guidelines under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA.

The agency said Yelp did not adequately test its apps to ensure that users under the age of 13 were prohibited from registering.

Yelp said in a blog post it reached the agreement on the penalty and that the violations came from "a bug in our mobile registration process" that failed to flag registrations from children under 13.

"The good news is that only about 0.02 percent of users who actually completed Yelp's registration process during this time period provided an underage birth date, and we have good reason to believe that many of them were actually adults," Yelp said.

"Regardless, we don't want any ambiguity when it comes to our users. When this problem was brought to our attention, we fixed it immediately and closed the affected users' accounts."

Yelp added that it "doesn't promote itself as a place for children, and we certainly don't expect or encourage them to write reviews about their plumbers, dentists, or latest gastronomic discoveries."

The FTC said the mobile gaming company TinyCo., which produces

games for children, agreed to pay a \$300,000 penalty for similar violations.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Yelp to pay US fine for child privacy violation (2014, September 17) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-09-yelp-fine-child-privacy-violation.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.