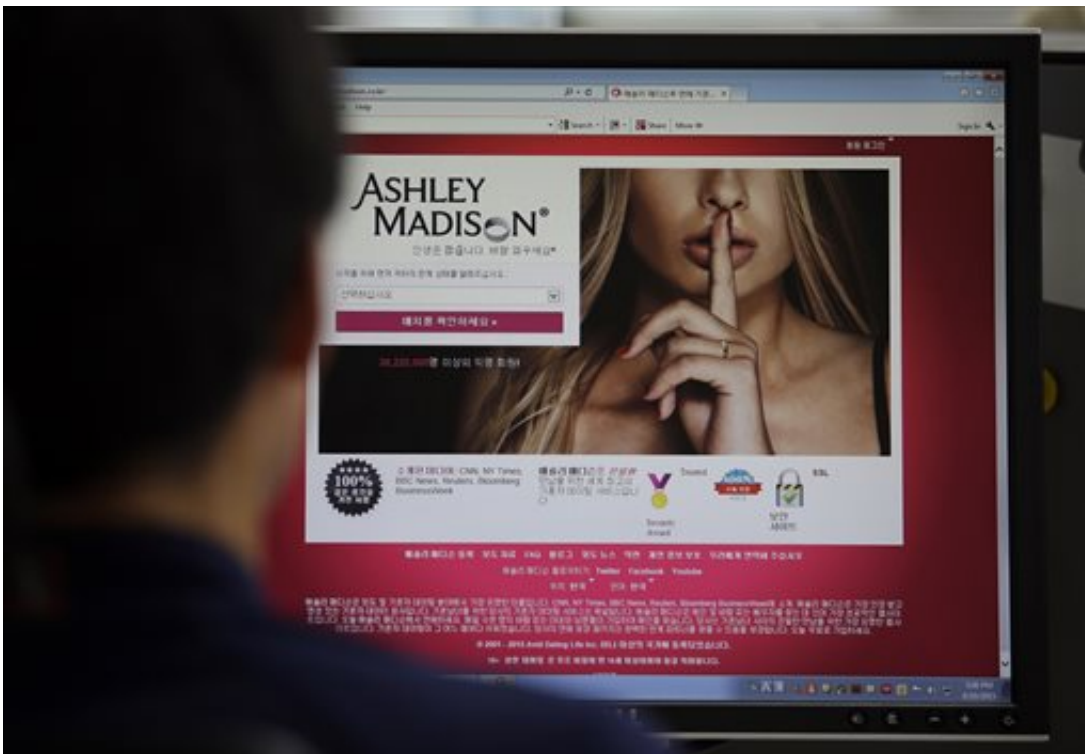


Ashley Madison users in US sue cheating website over breach (Update)

August 25 2015, by Amanda Lee Myers



A June 10, 2015 file photo shows Ashley Madison's Korean web site on a computer screen in Seoul, South Korea. Eight people across the U.S. who registered to use Ashley Madison are suing the cheating website after hackers released personal and detailed information on them and millions of other users, including credit card numbers and sexual preferences. (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man, File)

Eight people across the U.S. who registered to use Ashley Madison are

suing the website for cheaters after hackers released personal and detailed information of millions of users, including financial data and sexual proclivities.

The lawsuits were filed between last month and Monday by Ashley Madison users in California, Texas, Missouri, Georgia, Tennessee and Minnesota. They all seek class-action status to represent the estimated 37 million registered users of Ashley Madison.

The lawsuits, which seek unspecified damages, claim negligence, breach of contract and privacy violations. They say Ashley Madison failed to take reasonable steps to protect the security of its users, including those who paid a special fee to have their information deleted.

Last month, hackers infiltrated Ashley Madison's website and downloaded private information. The details—including names, emails, home addresses, financial data and message history—were posted publicly online last week.

"Needless to say, this dumping of sensitive personal and financial information is bound to have catastrophic effects on the lives of the website's users," according to a lawsuit filed Friday on behalf of an anonymous Los Angeles man who created an account with Ashley Madison in March 2012.

"As a result of (Ashley Madison's) unfair, unreasonable and inadequate data security, its users' extremely personal and embarrassing information is now accessible to the public," according to the lawsuit, filed by the Baltimore-based firm of Hammond Law.



In this Tuesday, April 1, 2014 file photo, Noel Biderman, chief executive of Avid Life Media Inc., poses during a portrait session. Avid Life Media operates AshleyMadison.com. Eight people across the U.S. who registered to use Ashley Madison are suing the cheating website after hackers released personal and detailed information on them and millions of other users, including credit card numbers and sexual preferences. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko, File)

Attorney Julian Hammond, who says his firm has litigated class-action lawsuits against companies like Google, Apple and Hulu, said the Ashley Madison breach is unprecedented in his experience.

The website's users are worried not only about identity theft but about the embarrassment of the release of intimate sexual preferences. Even registering for the site without having an actual affair could put marriages in jeopardy.

"I haven't seen anything like it," Hammond said Tuesday.

A spokesman for Avid Life Media, the Toronto-based company that owns Ashley Madison, referred to previously released statements by the company calling the hack malicious and an "act of criminality."

Avid Life on Monday began offering a \$500,000 Canadian (US \$378,000) reward for information leading to the arrest of members of a group that hacked the site.

"We will not sit idly by and allow these thieves to force their personal ideology on citizens around the world," the company said in a statement last week.

The U.S. litigation follows a \$578 million lawsuit filed in Canada last week, also seeking class-action status.

The hackers who took responsibility for Ashley Madison's data breach have said they attacked the website in an effort to close it down as punishment for collecting a \$19 fee without actually deleting users' data.

On Monday, Canadian police said the hack has triggered extortion crimes and led to two unconfirmed reports of suicides.

The credit-card information of U.S. government workers—some with sensitive jobs in the White House, Congress and the Justice Department—was revealed in the breach. Hundreds of email addresses in the data release appear to be connected to federal, provincial and

municipal workers across Canada.

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