

# Verizon to pay \$1.4M in 'supercookie' FCC settlement

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Verizon will pay a \$1.35 million fine over its "supercookie" that followed phone customers on the Internet and the government says it's required to get an explicit "yes" from customers for some kinds of tracking.

The supercookies landed their name because they were hard, or near-impossible, to block. Verizon uses them to deliver targeted ads to cellphone customers. The company wants to grow its advertising and media business.

The FCC settlement Monday said that it found that Verizon began using the supercookies with consumers in December 2012, but didn't disclose the program until October 2014. Verizon updated its privacy policy to disclose the trackers in March 2015 and gave people an option then to opt out.

The FCC settlement says Verizon customers have to choose to opt in before the company shares the consumer data with a third party. But for tracking within Verizon itself, the company can choose to have customers opt in or opt out, a less stringent requirement.

The New York company has already changed some practices critics considered most invasive.

Verizon did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

"Today's order will mean that other companies contemplating similar involuntary tracking will think twice before proceeding without explicit consumer consent," said Nate Cardozo, a staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a digital-rights group that has been critical of the supercookies.

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