

Google 'screwed up' in capturing private Wi-Fi data: Brin

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Google "screwed up" by accidentally gathering private wireless data while taking pictures for its "Street View" mapping service, co-founder Sergey Brin said Wednesday.

Brin's remarks came as two US lawmakers asked regulators whether the Internet giant had broken the law by capturing personal wireless data, while Italian and German authorities said they were looking into the matter.

Google said last week that Street View cars cruising and taking photographs of cities in over 30 countries had inadvertently gathered fragments of personal data sent over unsecured Wi-Fi systems.

"We screwed up," Brin told reporters here on the opening day of a Google conference for software developers. "I'm not going to make any excuses about it."

Brin said Google has "a lot of internal controls in place," although acknowledging that "obviously, they didn't prevent this error from occurring."

He said the Mountain View, California-based company was "putting more internal controls in place."

"Trust is very important to us and we are going to do everything we can to preserve this trust," Brin said.

Meanwhile, Representative Ed Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts, and Republican Representative Joe Barton of Texas sent a letter to the chairman of the US Federal Trade Commission, Jon Leibowitz. They asked for a response by June 2.

In their letter, the two members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce asked whether Google's Wi-Fi data collection practices "violate the public's reasonable expectation of

privacy."

"Do Google's actions form the basis of an unfair or deceptive act or practices that constitutes harm to consumers?" they asked. "Are Google's actions illegal under Federal law?"

Consumer Watchdog, a US consumer advocacy group that often criticizes Google, called on the FTC last week to launch a probe into the collection of private Wi-Fi information by Street View cars, calling the practice a "flagrant intrusion into consumers' privacy."

Italy's privacy regulator said it has opened an investigation into Google "to ascertain whether the treatment of private data in the Street View service was lawful and fair."

In Germany, prosecutors said they had launched a probe into Google on suspicion of computer crime following a lawyer's complaint against the firm's German subsidiary.

"It is not yet clear whether a specific crime has been committed," said a spokesman for the prosecutor's office in the northern city of Hamburg.

Illegal interception of data is punishable in Germany with a fine or up to two years in prison under a law that entered the books in 2007.

[Street View](#) allows users to view panoramic street scenes on [Google](#) Maps and "walk" through cities such as New York, Paris or Hong Kong.

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